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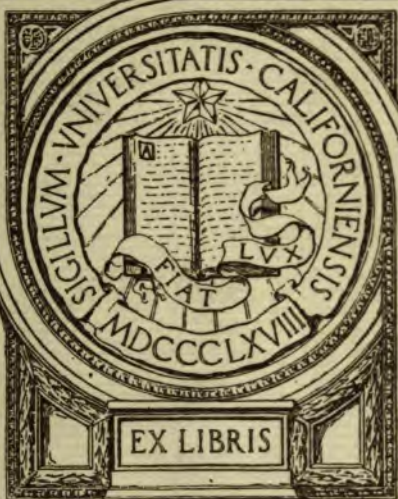
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THE FOUNDING OF FORTUNES

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FROM THE EAST UNTO THE WEST

FROM THE LAND OF THE SHAMROCK

GHOST BEREFT

THE FOUNDING OF FORTUNES.

BY

JANE BARLOW
"

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

“ χρήματα γὰρ ψυχὴ πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι ”

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THE FOUNDING OF FORTUNES

BOOK I OF TRANSFERS

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BOOK I

OF TRANSFERS

CHAPTER I

WHEN the inhabitants of Glenore were mentioning Port Maguire, they often added, with a toss of the chin, "There do be very poor people livin' in it entirely," and the remark was typical of their attitude towards the place. Sometimes, too, they would go further and say, "Port Maguire, is it? Bedad, themselves is the quare ones. You wouldn't aisy find e'er a respectable body in Port Maguire." Thirty years ago any mere casual visitor to the district might well have thought that the Glenore folk were giving themselves airs without much superiority over their rather distant neighbours to justify them, so unapparent, even from a relative point of view, was their own wealth and respectability. Still, a short sojourn would show some matters in which Glenore really had the advantage of Port Maguire. Squalid and dilapidated, indeed, were its two cabin rows, with their rough, eyeless walls, and hollowy, weedy thatch; but if you walked about a bit you would come upon more presentable features. There stood, for instance, close by among its wooded lawns, the Big House, which, though no longer occupied, bore witness to better days, besides yielding from its derelict demesne a few other benefits of a more substantial nature. Then, further off, towards Loughadea, the bog-land circled blackly round the woods of Emlisk Abbey, Lord Fintragh's place, which he seldom visited, but where his agent for the time being lived, generally with a large family, who might be seen riding and driving through the village, and thus giving a livelier aspect to its affairs. And

round about the silvery shining lough, and all over the lower and nearer hill-range, were wide grassy tracts, which albeit a somewhat tantalising spectacle, had a green and pleasant look.

At Port Maguire, on the contrary, you would have sought in vain for any such mitigations, or rather would have seen at a glance that they could not exist. For the place was obviously just a sandy, shingly spit, thrust out like the tongue of a buckle into the wide waters of Fintragh Bay, and bearing a single row of sorry little habitations. They were of such rude construction that it would have been hard to distribute the responsibility for their glaring defects fairly between the original design and subsequent dilapidations, and they had not even the excuse of mellowing antiquity. Not many years had passed since "talk" of a new pier and fish-curing station had enticed settlers to that dreary bit of the shore; but their hopes had already withered, and the talk had led to nothing more profitable than a rudimentary skeleton of the pier, traces of which were still visible, though the stormy tides washed away ever and anon a post or trestle. To the southward the village of Kilcashel lay, beyond an intricate network of inish and creek; northward a spur of Slieve Maelmaree hid Glenore, and the road which skirted the sea between these two points ran all its winding way through a barren region, where the sand was furrowed by a foamy ploughshare, and the heavy swathes of brown and green wrack seemed the only appropriate crop. Yet in many places this unpromising ground was painfully fenced into patches, and delved into trenches, whence struggled up a starveling vegetation, which close scrutiny might show to be either spectral "pitaties" or wraithlike oats, doing their best apparently to efface themselves from their incongruous position. A guide-book might without diverging from the truth have described the country as being cultivated to the water's edge, which sounds thrifty and prosperous; but the tiller thereof, anxiously commenting upon his "bit of oats" or few ridges of "pitaties," did not look like one whose thrift prosperity had crowned. Perhaps, too, he may not invariably have even deserved the success he had failed of winning. There was some foundation, in fact, for the state-

ment that "quare people" lived in Port Maguire, though their critics at Glenore often made it over-sweepingly, and though it might undoubtedly have been met by a counter-charge. If remarks were passed about the peculiarities of "ould Widdy Cleary the cross-patch," or "Tim the fool," or "them thievin' Wades," all of whom had their dwelling in Port Maguire, it was quite easy to point out several residents in Glenore whose idiosyncrasies entitled them to equally unflattering epithets. Still, Glenore continued to look down, while Port Maguire's attitude was rather that of defensive disparagement of others than of aggressive self-assertion. But this state of things was not destined to be permanent. Changes were to occur which would make any comparison between the two villages futilely superfluous.

In the earlier days I speak of—that is to say, about thirty years ago—a very small cabin on the side of the road, half-way between Glenore and Port Maguire, was inhabited by an old widow woman, one Mrs. Ginnelly. The situation of her dwelling enabled her to entertain an impartial opinion of her equi-distant neighbours on either hand; but, fortunately perhaps, her turn of mind being cynical, her opinions were universally disregarded, as they belonged to merely a very poor old ignorant crone, who owned little or nothing else except a few hens and a pig. Insignificant though she was, however, mentioned she must be, if we are to relate some "most poor matters" which did certainly "point to rich ends"—to nothing less, indeed, than the earliest financial operations of Timothy Galvin.

Timothy was six or seven years old when, his mother being in service, he came to make his abode with his grandmother, this shrivelled-up little old irascible woman, in her tumbledown wayside hovel. He was a stout, large-headed child, with sleek, orange-red hair and a flat, white face. He still wore the greyish-brown woollen skirts, which boys are slow to discard in those backward western counties, and he had not yet begun to attend school; but his grandmother's few acquaintances said he was "cute enough, mind you," conveying, by the turn of the phrase, that they had at first thought him somewhat unintelligent. When anything Mrs. Ginnelly disapproved of was mentioned, she usually said as

a preliminary, "Oh, indeed, me dear!" and she often gave this response if a neighbour spoke of Timothy.

Now it so happened that Mrs. Ginnelly was very fond of a bit of cabbage, and that Brian Coolichan at the farm a short step up towards Kilnagall had a grand field of an early sort, which he began to pull in cartloads for the Loughadea market about midsummer. Therefore through the warm July weather it became her custom on Saturday afternoon to send forth Timothy with a penny, and instructions to bring home a couple of good heads of cabbage. This commission Timothy executed with modifications of his own devising. He always brought home *one* head, and reported to his disappointed grandmother that they were "riz to pence apiece." But the truth was that on each transaction he made a halfpenny, which he fraudulently retained for his own purposes. These were sugar-sticks, two of which, very long and strongly flavoured, could be purchased for that sum from Nannie Cafferkey below at the crossroads. On most Saturdays, too, he was presented by his grandmother with a halfpenny for himself, and could thus revel in a sticky orgy, which drew itself sweetly out until the slow waning of the sunset warned him of high time for supper and bed. The place he always chose to feast in was the hollowed bank of a ditch, overshadowed by an elder bush, and the odour of its thick-bunched blossoms mingled with the pungent flavours of peppermint or aniseed. "T'owd boor-tree," as he called it—for he had come south—so associated itself with his happiest moments that he liked elder bushes ever after. Such pleasant memories were his long afternoons in the ditch. Basking comfortably on the swarded ledge in the flickering shadow and shine, where nobody came to intrude upon his occupation with the substantial sweets which melted so slowly that when the end at last arrived satiety tempered regret, his content was supreme. Perhaps he never enjoyed any other possessions quite so thoroughly. Even the touch of triumph at successful scheming flattered him, undisturbed by prick of conscience or dread of discovery. Yet his sense of security was a delusive one, due to the childish circumscription of his outlook and his inexperience of the way in which things come

round. If he had but known, he was in reality continually on the brink of detection.

For one immediate consequence of his embezzlements was the setting in of a coolness between the Widow Ginnelly and the Coolichan family, with whom she had hitherto been on long-established, old-neighbourly, good terms, and the innovation did not of course escape remark. Brian Coolichan himself wondered to his wife one Sunday morning why the "Widdy Ginnelly should have taken upon herself to look as sulky as a boiled codfish with not a word out of her," when he gave her "good day," driving by her from Mass when she was on her way to her chapel. Mrs. Coolichan, knowing of no particular reason at all, could only suggest that the old "crather" was "a black Presbyterian," a generally unobtrusive fact, capable on occasions of offence of being stirred up like the grounds in a cup of tea. But Timothy's grandmother did not stop short at these demonstrations of ill-will. She dropped about among her neighbours more or less libellous imputations against the Coolichans, their grabbing and grasping, their mean readiness to take advantage of a widow-woman and a child, whom for the special emergency she described as "innocent." And at last she formulated a more specific charge to Biddy McNeill, whom she fell in with near the crossroads. "Them Coolichans—oh, indeed, me dear! Did I tell you the scandalous price they did be puttin' on their cabbage, when I used to be sendin' Timothy to them for a bit? Pence apiece for not overly outsized ones either."

"Don't say so, woman," said Biddy. "Sure I meself am gettin' it from them these last two months, and never ped more than a pinny for a couple, and that big, you'd be hard set to squeeze one into the pot."

"Well, now, that bates all," said Mrs. Ginnelly, her wrath flaring up. "To keep two prices, and that agin the ouldest neighbour they have. They'll wait a while till I throuble them for anythin' more, good or bad, unless it was to be peltin' an owd kailrunt after their car. 'Deed now, lame leg and all, I've a good mind to shank up to them, and let them know what I think of their maneness. I'll make it me business to do that, one way or the other, troth I will."

Her resentment would probably have made it her business without much delay, had not Nannie Cafferkey just then happened to come by. Of course, she was told in detail of the Coolichans' unrighteous dealings about the cabbage, stress being laid upon that blackest feature in the case, their "chaitin' of the innocent child."

"Sendin' him his lone you were?" Nannie said reflectively—long experience as a small retailer of sweets had perhaps rubbed the bloom off her faith in the "innicence" of childhood—"Wid the pinny? Sure enough, now, I remember I used to be wonderin' how he came by so many coppers for sugarsticks of a Saturday. I thought he'd do himself a mischief, maybe, trottin' off wid the full of his two hands of stuff. But he's a stout lump of a child, glory be to goodness; he might ait what he plaised."

"I niver gave him aught more than a halfpenny of an odd Saturday for himself," said Mrs. Ginnelly; "the pinny was for the kail."

"Then he kep' the half of it, and tould you the wrong price, that was the way of it," Nannie said, with confidence. "He wouldn't," Timothy's grandmother declared, with startled incredulity. But the plot was now to unfold itself with dramatic completeness. "Here's Joe Sullivan, Coolichan's carter, comin' along," said Biddy McNeill; "it's him does be mostly sellin' in the field. Ax him what the child was payin' for the cabbage.—Good-day to you, Joe. Do you mind what cabbage Mrs. Ginnelly's little boy did be gettin' off you of a Saturday?"

"The little red-nobbed chap?" said the opportune Joe. "One head was all he would be gettin'. He said a couple would be more than he was able for carryin'. But fine and sharp he looked after the change out of his pinny. Bedad, you wouldn't get much out of *him*. One day he came when Mr. Coolichan himself was in the field, and I couldn't put me hand on a halfpenny for him at once, so Mr. Coolichan bid him take the head along, and niver mind about payin' for it. And 'twas a caution to see the rate he cut away at, for fear I'd find the change—mostly he'd be slow enough, but he run down the furrow that time like a rat wid a terrier set on him."

"What was I tellin' you, ma'am?" said Mrs. Cafferkey to Mrs. Ginnelly.

"The little Tory!" said Biddy McNeill, who thought it polite to take an admiring view of Timothy's actions; "he must ha' plinty of sinse to ha' conthived it so cute."

But his grandmother said darkly, "Oh, indeed, me dear!" and shook her head gloomily in its cap and tattered shawl. Luckily for Timothy, these revelations were not made until a week or so after he had ceased to reside with his grandmother, and had joined his parents upon their quitting domestic service. But then, Timothy was born to luck, which in time became brilliant enough fully to justify the narration of these trivialities. For, undoubtedly, there is a fascination about the process of tracing large things to their first little beginnings: the stream to its source, a trickle you could drink all up out of your hollowed hand; the plant to its thready root, with, maybe, the husk of the grain it sprang from clasped on an earthy filament. And if this be so, where growth was just in the witless nature of things, the interest becomes more personal in cases where the human mind and will seem to have had a greater part in producing the development. Even if we refrain from misapplying "What man has done, man may do," we illogically feel ourselves brought nearer to the achievement, or at least the chances. To learn how a merchant prince started in life with a single shilling, or how the most acclaimed of generals began his career by scaring crows, may tantalise or encourage, according to one's mood, but it will seldom bore.

For a long time after this episode, however, Timothy's good luck was seemingly in abeyance, and his fortunes promised no increase of prosperity. Rather the reverse. His removal from his grandmother's roof was one result of the death of old Sir Denis O'Donnell, in whose house the elder Tim Galvin had served for many years as under-butler. Old Tim had through long service become a somewhat favoured member of the household, and was generally addressed as Mr. Galvin. Accordingly, quite a sensation prevailed among his acquaintances when one winter, the Family sojourning abroad, and the servants being left on board wages, he had taken occasion to marry Julia Ginnelly,

a girl from nobody knew where, who had got employment as a supernumerary in the laundry, and was as ugly as if she had been bespoke. It was commonly considered that "she must have put a quare comether on the old man before he would have looked at the likes of her"; and most people were disposed to pity him as the victim of an infatuated misalliance. Only a few enemies opined that "she was, maybe, plinty good enough for him, the ould sawney," and recalled the fact that he had begun his career as nothing better than "dog-boy to thim Hawkinses at Lamlas Castle; rich people who were nobody at all."

However, the strangeness of the match had become an old story half a dozen years later, when, on the breaking up of the O'Donnell establishment, he was pensioned off with an annuity of fifteen pounds paid quarterly. Mrs. Galvin, like an otherwise very dissimilar historical character, might have urged that in her dealings with her captive she had used no more unlawful magic than the influence of a strong will over a weak one, and she now proceeded to exercise it in the execution of two plans upon which she had long been bent—the starting of a little shop and the fetching home of her little son. This latter was accomplished easily, and, as we have seen, at an opportune moment for Timothy. But the former project came to less than naught. In fact, it began as a failure. For the savings which she had assumed on her husband's part were not, she found, in existence, sporting propensities having effectually prevented accumulations, so that all he could produce was what share of tips had accrued to him at his master's funeral, a paltry and inadequate sum regarded as business capital. Bitter upbraidings followed the disclosure of Timothy's unsatisfactory budget, and only the pension restrained her from parting company with him then and there. But the sequel was, that after two or three unsuccessful attempts at setting up in a smaller and smaller way, they betook themselves, amid the grievous downfall of all her ambition, to a residence in the very poor little hamlet of Port Maguire, with its illusory talk of a new pier, and its more solid advantage of being within a long walk of Kilfernish House, where the quarterly pounds were payable. Here a decade passed, marked by only one important change in the

Galvins' circumstances, and that seemed to mother and son on the whole a mischance. Old Timothy could not readily adjust himself to his new environment. After his long enjoyment of the free living up at a Big House, where everybody from master to scullery-maid had been as "off-handed" as a domestic's heart could wish, the fare in the smoky cabin, coarse and scanty, and moreover doled out to him by a grudging hand, was a rough test. He stood it ill, shrinking under it from portly floridity into a shrivelled sallowness; and within three years he died. The neighbours argued from the plainness of the funeral—no wake, and a coffin that might have come from the Union—that she was "unnathural naygurly," and also "glad to be shut of the ould crathur." But the last part of the inference, at any rate, was erroneous. Mrs. Galvin thought her husband's death an embarrassing event. For she well knew that by rights his pension had expired with him, and what else in all the world had she to look to except the precarious produce of a "pitaty" patch encumbered with stones and rent? She said to herself, it is true, that unless the Family were "maner than the muck under their feet," they would surely not discontinue the payment to poor Timothy's widow and orphan child; yet it seemed to her eminently desirable that they should be protected from every risk of behaving in such an unworthy manner. Accordingly, when on the next quarter-day she tramped punctually over to Kilfernish House, now occupied by the Family's agent, she forbore to mention the incident of Timothy's demise, and replied to all subsequent inquiries that "the poor man was finely, thank God, but too much gathered up to be walkin' that far himself." She rather prided herself upon her thrifty use of the vague phrase "gathered up," instead of "rheumatics," or any other specific ailment; it gave a sort of negative veracity to her story, because she might have told one so much more circumstantially untrue; and it became her stereotyped formula on these occasions. As time went on, however, she had now and then brought with her, by request, a paper stating that Timothy Galvin was lame, but otherwise enjoying good health. At the foot of the document appeared the name of Peter Mooney, P.P., which, like the rest of the

composition, was in the best handwriting of Timothy Galvin, jun., now a big lump of a boy, and fully educated up to Port Maguire standards. He had at school shown some aptitude for accounts. These certificates had hitherto always been accepted without demur. Still, his mother not unreasonably regarded the demand for them as a threatening symptom. She trusted much to the remoteness of Port Maguire—a good ten miles from Kilfernish House—and more to the fact that the money, after all, “warn’t comin’ out of Mr. Cooper, the agent’s own pocket,” which seemed likely to lessen his zeal for prosecuting inconvenient researches. The Family were safely out of reach. They were, indeed, living abroad on diminished resources, and at long intervals one or other of them might be moved to remark that old Timothy Galvin must be the age of Methuselah by now, if he were really alive; but nobody dreamed of taking action on the doubt.

Upon the whole, the matter caused her no very serious anxiety except when she considered it in connection with young Timothy’s sloth. Loyally as she adored him, with the single-heartedness of a one-fetish worshipper, she had to admit that he was excessively lazy, showing a marked distaste for all sorts of active occupation, and steadily declining to do a stroke of work either by land or water. It was not as if he were not well able for it, as he had grown up stout and fairly tall. His neighbour Peter Hegarty said that he was a “big, soft slouch, who ought to be kep’ wid his hands full and his mouth empty for a week or so, till he got some of the fat melted off him.” Timothy, however, would not for a moment have tolerated such heroic remedies for his good condition, with which he was pretty well satisfied. He infinitely preferred to lounge on the beach or by the hearth, as the weather suggested, and partake of whatever was boiling in the black pot, which would be at best “pitaties,” and at worst “yella male.” Mrs. Galvin had never yet been, like some of her neighbours, compelled to resort to seaweed. Sometimes he waxed slightly sulky, in a whining sort of way, if his mother failed to produce what she called “a bit of kitchen” for him in the shape of a shred of rusty bacon, or a little dripping, but as a rule he

did not grumble. This inertness it was that made Mrs. Galvin wonder often what would become of him, supposing that anything happened to her, or that Mr. Cooper stopped payment. She occasionally put that view of the situation before Timothy, but without any effect. At the age of seventeen or eighteen few youths can have had less apparent prospect of making a fortune, or even of avoiding the Union as his ultimate goal, than had Timothy Galvin, seated blinking in the sun without, or dozing by the fire within his mother's murky door. Their few hens picking about his feet, with a wary eye cocked against possible kicks, were busy, purposeful creatures compared with him. But the pig, soliloquising half asleep in a corner of the house, existed under more analogous conditions, each, though from different motives, being an object of meal-providing solicitude to the sandy-haired, sharp-faced woman of the house, while to draw the parallel closer, each seemed alike unforeboding of what even the nearest future might have in store.

But by this time, surely, appearances should be to the discerning student of epigrammatic wisdom a caution rather than a snare. And if such a person had conjectured that in Timothy's supine frame abode considerable latent activity of mind, the surmise would have been fully borne out by the course of events. For one early autumn day there came jiggetting towards Port Maguire an outside car bringing Timothy Galvin a splendid chance, to be seized and used by him with an alert energy, persevering push, and manly self-reliance—with, in short, an all-round display of sound business capacity, in strange contrast to the qualities which had manifested themselves upon the surface of his character during the long years of his first youth.

CHAPTER II

“WELL, sir,” said Joe Kearns, who was driving with reins chiefly of rope, “you’re at Port Maguire now, and if you weren’t there, I should suppose you’d be some place else.”

“I’ve had that notion myself any time these last twenty years and upwards,” said Nicholas Conroy, who was being driven.

“Bedad, then,” said Joe, “there’s many after such a length of time’d ha’ been apter ha’ kep’ that notion, and kep’ theirselves out of this.” His critical glance round argued him among the many.

“Twenty years is a long while to keep notions or anything else,” said Nicholas; “and as for keeping myself out of this, I might be bothered how to keep myself here—or anywhere else much longer, if I’m not mistaken.”

“Sure, have it your own way,” Joe said, after a pause to consider the bearings of this remark; “but I’m afraid I must trouble you to be lavin’ yours here at the wrong end of the street, by raison of percaivin’ they haven’t yet repaired the roadway there”—he pointed ahead with his whip—“where the say tuck and made a breach in it in the stormy weather about Easter. The mare’s no great hand at leppin’ in harness; she might likely wreck the ould car. Only how’ll you contrive wid the big box? If yourself’s able for liftin’ it, the pair of you looks one thing and weighs another.”

“Oh, the young ones and I can make a shift to take it between us that far,” said Nicholas. “Jump down, children. The line here’s only open for foot passengers.”

The children, a small boy and girl, on the other side of the car, had been listening rather resentfully to this dialogue, the scene of which was Mahony’s Corner, where the sea-skirting road sends out a branch at right-angles to run

along the shingly spit occupied by Port Maguire. The unwonted jocular tone which their father had been prone to assume ever since their arrival yesterday in this strange and desolate country, had a depressing effect upon them, and made them vaguely apprehensive. For the natural conservatism of childhood was in their case strengthened by personal experiences deprecating change. They now climbed down from the car awkwardly, as if it were an unfamiliar vehicle. Delia was encumbered by a large birdcage, so enveloped in newspapers that the nature of the occupant could be inferred only from its voice, which sounded ambiguously, as it mewed pathetically at times, and at times derisively chuckled. A few small parcels and an umbrella likewise fell to her share, as her father and brother each took a handle of the big leather-bound trunk. She followed them with difficulty at a lop-sided trot.

Port Maguire is a place of which somebody had once said, unconsciously adapting an ancient epigram, that if you got into it, the next best thing could happen you would be to get out of it again as soon as possible. Another, more original perhaps, remarked that the most anybody could say for it would be that there wasn't much of it, which is true enough. There is just one row of it, splitting that tongue of seaweedy shingle, thrust out about half-way between Fintragh and Dillisk Heads. Walking towards its tapering point, you have an ocean horizon before you, and on either hand that ocean's fretted and intricate fringes. To the right the nearest strand is piled high with silvery sandhills, and Port Maguire faces these with its dozen or so of dark doorways. On this afternoon the softly mounded hillocks and hollows sent moonlight gleams across the slip of blue water in the slant of the late August sun.

The new-comers were preoccupied with more immediate and obtrusive matters. Nicholas, tugging at the box, learned that he had overrated his strength, and began to cough and pant. Delia went picking her way uneasily, for Port Maguire's street spreads an uninviting Gideon's fleece of sloppiness in the driest weather. The skirt of her black frock was too long, and trailed at the back, but she could not spare a hand to rescue it, though the consciousness of it

made her miserable at every step. When she quickened her pace, in fear of falling too far behind, the unwieldy cage swung against her ankles. She thought it was an interminably long row, but in fact a spalpeen of average agility could have darted from one end to the other in less than a minute, even if he had paused midway to whoop defiance at his pursuers. Her brother Bernard found it as much as he could do to keep his end of the box straight, and devoted all his attention to that. But when more than three parts of the way down the row, their father said, "Stop. That's the house yonder. We'll sit down here a bit—till I get my breath."

Just there several large lumps of boulders were ranged along the road-edge in a rough, low parapet, and upon it he sat down; so did Bernard; but Delia still stood, uncomfortably holding her parcels, and propping up the cage. Nicholas was at first badly out of breath, and his distress passing off, left a feeling of irritation, which he expressed by saying, "I was a great ass to let you saddle us with that blamed old fowl-trap to lug about, instead of making yourself useful."

Delia, who had been watching him with much misery, felt a sudden conviction that she was monstrously selfish and undutiful, though she only said hoarsely, "I could run the umbrella under the strap of the box, and then I'd have another hand."

"Leave it as it is, and don't bother," said her father; "but I wish all such trash was at the bottom of the Channel. God knows there's trouble enough without it that a man's bound to take along."

Two items in his trouble at once appropriated the innuendo, and were aggrieved and abashed thereby, the more so because they had not often heard the like, their father's lapses into querulousness being another disagreeable novelty of their travels. As they naturally had never experienced a return, after a score of ravaging years, to the scene of undespoiled youth, they could not make allowance for its strain upon nerves and spirits, and they were alternately puzzled and cast down by what seemed to them groundless hilarity—children must always see the reason of their mirth—and unmerited snubs.

After a minute or two, however, Bernard said, as if to

suggest a pleasanter subject, "Cousin Julia must keep a fine lot of cows—dozens and dozens!"

"Cows?" said his father. "What's put that in your head? As far as I know, she never owned one in her life."

"Well, beasts, I meant," said Bernard. "Maybe horses are what she has. Look at all the doors there are. I've counted over ten. But they're liker cattle-sheds than stables." He pointed up and down the cabin row, where at that moment no human inhabitant was in sight.

"Now see you here, my man," Nicholas said sternly, "if you don't want to get into trouble, you'd better not begin playing the fool. This isn't the place for it nor the time. In fact I may as well tell both of you once for all," he continued, sitting up straighter, with a solemn air of exhortation, "that you needn't expect to find everything at Port Maguire just the same as it was across the water at Aberglavany, where you had your poor grandmother cockering you up. You may depend upon it that there'll be plenty for you to put up with over here—plenty. But if you've any sense at all, you'll soon see that you've reason to be thankful you have them to put up with. So let me hear no more foolery about cattle-sheds."

He spoke with the more peremptoriness because he was arguing against a shock which he had himself received from the contact between his own memories and the realities of the place. The children listened with concerned submission. Delia understood clearly enough, but Bernard only gathered that for some inscrutable reason live stock must not be mentioned in Port Maguire. Even when by-and-by he saw a white duck, followed by a small child in a pink frock, waddle out of one of the black doors, and became aware of a woman dimly knitting at another, he did not abandon his theory about the cows. Then Nicholas rose, saying he'd better be moving on. "It'll only be a short voyage now, and we'll make a shift with the cargo."

His tone was now studiously cheerful and encouraging, for, anxious about first impressions, he did not wish the children to arrive looking scared or woebegone. He trusted that their appearance was otherwise tidy and respectable, and could see nothing much amiss, with an eye not very critical indeed, luckily for his peace of mind, as a night and

a day of steamer and train had left them begrimed and dishevelled. They were small children for their seven or eight years of age, slight and pale, with dark eyes and black hair, which in Delia's case was long and fine.

The house now imminent on their left was a human habitation unmistakably, and moreover—unlike any other structure visible far and wide—it had a slated roof, two stories, and whitewashed walls. There were three windows above the green-painted door and shop-front. On close inspection it might be noticed that the glazing of this was curiously complicated, having been patched together ingeniously from the fragments of a larger plate-glass sheet wrecked years ago in the fire at Rooney's Place, away over at Mullinskea. A little hardware and a few biscuit tins were the only goods displayed. Beyond it nothing interposed between house and sea except a sloping bank of shingle and a ruined pier.

Standing at the shop door, Mrs. Julia McQuaide watched the approach of the three that could be no other than the visitors she was expecting, though they were all strangers to her—especially, it seemed, the gaunt, lank, hollow-cheeked man whom she must identify with the stout and ruddy youth known to her as Cousin Nicholas Conroy. At their last meeting he had been on the eve of starting to seek his fortune—*make* it, he would have said—excited, elated, and full of self-confidence, a mood which found an outward flourish in the display of a newly-acquired watch-chain and a green and gold scarf. The twenty intervening years might literally have rolled over him, flattening and elongating to such effect that her first thought as he came within eyeshot was a hope he “mightn't be thinking of going off into a decline the way his poor father did before him.”

Mrs. McQuaide herself was at fifty still middle-aged and comely, with a serviceable jargonelle-pear complexion and a frame portly yet active. Her greetings were cordial and voluble, and carried them rapidly through the first meeting, of which they had all been more or less in dread. “Ah, Nicholas, man, it's late you are,” she said, as the trio came up to the door. “I was beginnin' to misdoubt you wouldn't be here this evenin'.”

"Why, Cousin Julia," said Nicholas, who was by this time being shaken hands with so violently that the trunk swung to and fro, nearly taking little Bernard off his feet, "the trains were behind-hand all the way, and then we'd the work of the world to get any sort of a conveyance from Rangort, and that delayed us. They've not smartened themselves up much yet in these parts."

"They have not, bedad. But you're kindly welcome to Port Maguire, anyhow," said Mrs. McQuaide. "And there'd have been more to tell you so if you hadn't delayed comin' till they were out of the way altogether—like poor McQuaide himself—and if it wasn't that the boys and me sither-in-law's away rapin' in the field down below. They say it'll rain on us before mornin'."

"Oh, then you're keepin' the little bit of land as well as the business?" Nicholas said.

"Indeed are we, and it's the most we have," said Mrs. McQuaide, who meanwhile had kissed both of the children. "But you're killed draggin' along that great box, and you not lookin' anyways over-strong. Come in, all of you, and lave it in the shop. We'll have a cup of tay directly." She led them in under a bunch of dangling zinc buckets, and past an empty counter, to the door of a back parlour. This struck one on entering as a very small and yet a very spacious place, as its window let in a far-sweeping seascape, which at first seemed to draw one's eyes from the strait walls and few crowded chairs. It was so evidently reserved for special occasions, that Nicholas involuntarily put on his stiffest company manner as he took a slippery seat and said, "But I'm detaining you from the shop."

"Sure not at all," said Mrs. McQuaide. "There's apt to be no one in it; and if there was, I'd hear them here readier than in the kitchen."

Mrs. McQuaide's customers were wont to summon her by either raps or resonant kicks on the counter, if they possessed pennies or boots. Failing these they coughed.

"You're not doin' a great lot of business, then?" said Nicholas. His tone somehow suggested that he was not loth to draw this inference.

"Next to nothin' you could give a name to. The only

chance there was for us would ha' been the fishin' gettin' up. But Mr. Scott never finished the pier there, and the most of it was swep' away a dozen year ago in an outrageous storm. So the lads just creep out a bit in their ould boats the way they done ever, and it's worser instead of better the fishin' is. Not worth drownin' themselves for, I do often be tellin' them. All I'm sellin' these times is mostly a trifle of Indian male. The pitaties is light this year, but they'll put them over Christmas. The people 'ud laugh at you if you axed them to be buyin' baccy or tay. And the men drinks what they drink below at Sweeney's. But what's the little girl wantin'?" For Delia was plucking at her father's sleeve to whisper.

"It was a hot pull comin' along," Nicholas said apologetically; "and if you'd be so good, she'd be glad of a drink of water."

This statement only imperfectly interpreted Delia's wish, and Mrs. McQuaide's hospitality insisted upon further modifications. To provide a guest with such a beverage would have grievously wounded her self-respect, and, moreover, at Port Maguire fresh water was never abundant, and seldom nothing worse than brackish. So she said, "Ah, to be sure—the poor child. But I'll find her a sup of milk or somethin'," and bustled away into the shop, leaving Delia foiled in her attempt to procure suitable refreshment for the inmate of the cage. There was a sound of glassy clinking for a time, and then Mrs. McQuaide returned triumphantly with tumblers and a greenish bottle. "By good luck," she said, "there's one yet of the dozen of liminade Johnson sent over by mistake along wid an order, and that wasn't worth while returnin'. It's lyin' here this good while, but it's none the worse, no fear. I'll halve it between the children just till the tay's ready."

She uncorked it with the help of several rather unlikely implements, and after an amount of difficulty which made Delia miserably feel herself a troublesome person, especially as her father said at intervals during the process, "Ah, never mind, Cousin Julia, don't be botherin' yourself about it. Sure she can very well wait till tea-time."

At last, however, it duly popped and fizzed, and Delia and

Bernard were each presented with a tumbler half full of seething froth. It happened to be their first experience of effervescent drinks, and they were somewhat awe-stricken thereby. Bernard, indeed, sat looking into his agitated glass with undissembled mistrust. But Delia, who was more alive to the duties of mannerliness, felt constrained to take a cautious sip, which proved disastrous. For she choked over it with a violence which at first alarmed, and then sorely embarrassed her, so that she sat covered with confusion, not dispersed even by the diversion of tea. Therefore she rejoiced when Mrs. McQuaide soon afterwards suggested that the children would maybe like to run out for a bit on the strand at the back. She rose up with alacrity and clutched her cage, whereupon Mrs. McQuaide remarked, "Ah, look at that now; the crathur won't be parted from it. And what sort of a bird might you have in it, honey?"

For answer Delia pulled off a piece of the newspaper, discovering a white cockatoo, with a sulphur-coloured crest, leaden grey claws, and round, wrinkle-set eyes, which seemed to have been surveying the world wearily through many cycles of cynicism. "Glory be to goodness, but he's the lovely bird!" quoth Mrs. McQuaide; "and I should suppose he's the greatest pet wid you at all."

But Delia's reply was not the expected one.

"I didn't ever like himself much," she said. "He's cross, but he was belongin' to her."

"The poor grandmother owned it," Nicholas explained, as Mrs. MacQuaide was letting the children out at the back door; and before it closed Delia caught the condoling response, "Ah, the poor woman! rest her soul." She had tried to hurry out of reach of it, for she shrinkingly hated to be reminded how the brisk and cheery life from which hers had so lately parted company had vanished into a mere subject for pious ejaculations.

The aspect of the beach did not impress the children favourably. At the trim little South Welsh village, which had hitherto been their home, a small sea inlet had run up to within walking distance; but its dainty rim of silver sand resembled this strand hardly more than old Mrs. Conroy's fleckless white boards had resembled one of Port

Maguire's murky mud floors. A rough shingle-belt, stretching up to the stone walls, as rough almost, doorless and windowless, of the cabin-row, here and there crossed by slimy green streaks, where a trickle crept among the stones, blotted with dark bundles of seaweed, and strewn with unsightly land-litter—that was what lay before them in the last hot westering rays. Pungent odours drawn from a miscellany of refuse filled the air.

Still, a rim of blue-green water far receded, as the tide was low, sparkled at the children with a charm which they were not of an age to resist. So they began to frame their footsteps towards it over the shingle, Delia much encumbered by her heavy cage. She had stopped to rest her arms by setting it down for a minute on a convenient rock, when she noticed the approach of several children, who were coming fitfully nearer with much hard staring of large eyes. They were all wildly ragged, and two or three of the boys, though as big as Bernard, wore petticoats of dull red or grey flannel, a peculiarity which at sight aroused his aversion and contempt. The birdcage was evidently the focus of their curiosity, as advancing in a band, with halts and whisperings, they at last surrounded it with a circle, which became a double one as its circumference diminished, till the inner line could reach forth fingers and touch the bars. Delia and Bernard looked on with silent uneasiness.

"That's a quare sort of say-gull you have," one of the boys remarked after prolonged contemplation.

"It's no sort of say-gull, get away!" Bernard replied defiantly, somewhat to the dismay of his sister, who, though not less hostile, would have preferred to maintain a more conciliatory attitude. This rebuff caused some of the party to draw back slightly; but most of them continued their inspection undeterred. Bernard glowered at them unheeded.

"Look-a, he's got little cakes!" an admiring voice said close by. He had two half-eaten biscuits in his hand, and he now saw that upon these a pair of enormous glowing violet eyes were steadily fixed. Then their gaze travelled up from a low level and settled on Bernard's face.

"You may have them, if you like," Bernard said, making the transfer hurriedly. If the mysterious deeps of the mid-

night blue could seem suddenly to concentrate their attention upon you, the sensation would no doubt be disconcerting, and the earnest regard of three-year-old Thady Finegan, even when his soul was set simply upon wine biscuits, produced in some degree such an effect.

This incident created a second centre of interest as the small children clustered desirously about lucky Thady's enviable crumbling; but the larger-sized were not diverted from their notes and comments upon the cockatoo. Presently one of the biggest boys, a tow-locked person, whose broad face had apparently no choice of expressions between either a scowl or a grin, went a step further, and thrust his finger temerarily through the wires. The result was a nimble rush and a vicious nip, which made the imprudent investigator yell. He then, with oaths and curses, thumped upon the top of the cage so furiously that the bird scuffled fluttering to the floor, though untouched by anything more perilous than fright. Worse might probably have befallen Jacko, only that the other spectators, not wishing to be interrupted, said, "Och, quit that now, Barney Cuddihy! Leave terrifyin' it!" and hustled him out of reach, while Bernard added sternly, "Didn't I bid you let him alone?"

Of these things Delia was an alarmed observer, and they made her extremely anxious to get away from her new acquaintances. But it appeared to her that an abrupt departure, without any assignable reason, would look uncivil. So she cast about to find some plausible pretext for withdrawal. That was not far to seek, since just then her eye fell upon a small heap, disagreeable of aspect, lying on the shingle close by. It was composed of dead fish, comprising some large skates—hideous-headed, three-tailed creatures, whose like she had never seen before. Obviously they had lain there for a considerable time, and Delia did not overstate the facts when she said to Bernard, "There's a very horrible smell in this place, and I think it must be those nasty old fish. Ugh! did you ever in your life see such frightful-looking beasts? Let us go somewhere else."

Bernard was quite willing, and they began to move on. But Delia's fine manners were once more to cause her trouble. For Barney Cuddihy had noticed her irrepressible

shudder of disgust at the ugly skates, and saw in it an opportunity for gratifying his general love of tormenting, and wreaking his special spite against the owner of that "ould divil of a screech-owl wid a beak on it like a baste of a big cock-lobster, fit to take the finger off you." Accordingly he picked up a skate in each hand, and ran after Delia, swinging them wildly, and shouting, "Ah, now, wudn't you be takin' a purty little fish home wid you? You could be carryin' it aisy slung round your neck."

Delia, seeing him rushing towards her with this threat of unendurable horror, was seized with panic. She set down the cage and fled away, shrieking with an ecstatic shrillness seldom heard, even on Port Maguire beach, where excitable children play and quarrel from dawn to dusk. Her stumbling flight would have been as futile as brief, for her pursuer was swift on his bare feet, and gained on her frightfully, only that just when his loathly weapons seemed to be flapping about her very ears, somebody darted between, and shoved him away with an energy which sent him staggering and clattering back several paces over the loose stones. "You just let her be, Barney Cuddihy, or I'll make you swally the two of them," said this rescuer softly, but clearly.

She was a very ragged girl of ten or eleven, tall and large-framed, with a great halo of hair, hued like withered beech-leaves, tangled about eyes which had as many changes of colour as smooth sea-shallows when cloud-shadows slide swiftly over them. Her voice, low and musical, and a little sad, was not quite congruous with her sturdy aspect, giving the hearer a faint thrill of such surprise as he might have felt if a game-cock had cooed. "You get out of that wid yourself, ould red nob!" Barney yelled to her defiantly, but keeping his distance. "For two twopennies I'd take and hunt you and her from here to Burrinragh!"

How this challenge was received by her champion Delia never knew, because at this moment her father and Mrs. McQuaide appeared at the neighbouring back door, alarmed by her penetrating shrieks. For these she felt unable now to account adequately, and she stood cowed and tongue-tied by the sense of guiltiness that supervenes upon the yielding to any sort of passion. Mrs. McQuaide's view of the matter

was that "the two children had a right to be in their beds, instead of colloquing wid that Biddy O'Keefe, who banged Banagher for wildness and villiny."

Said she: "It's goin' on for eight o'clock, and they're knocked about wid thravellin' all day. That's apt to be what makes her so cross, unless, belike, she's passionate-tempered by nature. And there's the last of the sun goin' down that red, I declare you might think he was on fire."

The sun had indeed hollowed out a cave among the grey mists on the far horizon, and, shorn of his beams, was filling it for a moment with an incandescent scarlet ball. At her ignorant remark Bernard's sudden wish to communicate some solar statistics out of his school reading-book almost burned through the clouds of his shyness, but they hung too heavily, and the opportunity passed.

Delia's day ended very forlornly. Never during her life, which had been spent in a little roadside cottage, had she met with such squalid discomfort as now, when she was in by far the best lodging Port Maguire could afford. She thought it would be impossible for anybody to sleep up under those low, cobwebby rafters, on that queer wooden box, covered with that dirty old rug. Had it not been for the recollections of Barney Cuddihy, she would have preferred to spend the night out on the weed-hung rocks. A much worse trouble was her sense that she had fallen into disfavour with everybody. Her father frowned upon her with mortified disapprobation. Even Bernard had looked away from her and said "good night" glumly, blaming her as the cause of his consignment to bed before dark. Moreover, the gloomy attic-corner was pervaded by a strong, unfamiliar odour—the choking reek of stale peat smoke—an evil haunting left by the aromatic blue wreaths, a whiff of which, she had often heard her old Irish grandmother aver, would do a body's heart good. But this now helped to heighten the feeling of mournful strangeness that made dismal the tardy oncoming of her first dream in Port Maguire.

CHAPTER III

THEIR father, meanwhile, sitting out on a rock by the pier ruin, was discoursing to his cousin, Christy McQuaide. The evening was mild and generally still, with much moonlight muffled among large, dim-white clouds, so that faint gleams of blue and tarnished silver came from the sea and the sand-hills. Nicholas had been glad to escape from the smoky indoor atmosphere, which aggravated his cough, and from Mrs. McQuaide's sympathetic comments upon it, which irked him sorely, through all his sense that he could ill afford to reject the manifestations of any friendly concern. To accept these while refusing, for example, some intolerable peppermint lozenges, was a problem in the art of social intercourse with which he lacked the spirits to cope successfully ; and he evaded it by a melancholy silence.

Yet even then there had been some circumstances that disposed him to communicativeness. After being for many hours shut up in the company of children too young for rational conversation, he had arrived among people in whom he could presuppose kinsfolks' interest and strangers' ignorance about the details of his affairs. Pride, again, urged him to make it straightway clear that, despite his broken health, he had not come in a helpless state, with designs of unduly taxing their hospitality. And alone with Christy out of doors, where nothing jarred or obtruded, and there was soothing in the dimness and the murmurous stir of the water, it seemed suddenly natural for him to speak what lay uppermost in his mind. Still, he would hardly have done this so fully and freely had it not been for the feeling of confidence which had somehow sprung up as soon as he set eyes on the tall, sunburnt youth with black-cropped head and

blue fisherman's jersey, who had come in an hour ago with a reaping hook, and had been introduced to him as his cousin, Christy McQuaide. Perhaps trust at first sight is the only genuine sort, though no shepherd has proverbially philosophised for us upon that point. At any rate, here was Nicholas, after an acquaintance which might have been conveniently measured by minutes, unfolding to his companion the results of many a sleepless night's meditations. They were mainly a plan for the future of Delia and Bernard, simple enough in itself, but made possible and expedient by a somewhat dramatic incident in his career, which had till then been, on the whole, happily uneventful. He had risen steadily from porter to guard, and from guard to ticket-collector on a Cambrian railway, and had married a pretty Welsh Annie Evans, for whom he had been able to provide a pleasant little cottage and garden-plot. But Annie, always delicate, the "crathur," as his old mother who lived with them said, had died without any more definite warning one fine May evening, when cuckoos were calling the latest spring news about the meadows, and when Nicholas, even more irrelevantly, was speeding past on the Llanfyrne express on his way to tell her about a wonderful piece of good luck. That unexpected victory of Papercutter in the Roycroft Handicap Hurdles at the May Meeting had put him in possession of two hundred guineas, the laying out of which he had been eagerly planning niched in his van corner. The two hundred pounds should go into a concern he knew of that would pay fifteen shillings a month, while the two hundred shillings were devoted to various matters of clothing and furniture, upon which he knew Annie had set her heart—that much was already settled by the time he reached the door of a house left to him desolate. For some time after its opening he had regarded his new wealth with disgusted indifference, much as he did Annie's strip of garden, where the rows of fine purple-veined cabbage-heads were thriving, and the lilacs bunching up their blossoms, not at all for her pride and pleasure. But the days came when he said to himself that this sum made all the difference in the world. This was when he at last began perforce to notice that breathing had become not altogether a matter of course,

and that skin and bone mainly framed a habitation for the cough of which a medical man once exhorted him to be careful. "Careful!" quoth Nicholas; "I'd sooner give it every chance to stray off my premises, and let me get a night's sleep."

It remained with him, however, and in a year or so he found himself obliged to resign his situation. On the first payment of his pension he jingled the coins in his pocket, saying to himself that the next change would be at the terminus, and a good job too; he'd come far enough. Yet he was conscious that the conceit rang false. Genuinely defiant of fate he could not be with the future of two children on his mind. When their grandmother's death brought its full weight to bear, he was all at once seized with a fever-fit of anxiety to get them settled somewhere before the cold weather returned to practise on his life; but their family connections being few and widely scattered, the prospect of doing so looked barren of hope. It was his recollection of a certain motherly good-naturedness in his cousin, Julia McQuaide, whom he had last seen so long ago in the early days of her abode at Port Maguire, that had prompted him to resort thither as his first move.

"Well, now, Christy, what would you say?" Nicholas said, after explaining his position, both as to health and finance. He had been relieved to find that Christy accepted all his statements in an unconventional manner, without making any polite protestations against the possibility of "somethin' happening him" before long. As a rule, his acquaintances received any references to such a probability with an assumption of incredulous amusement. They would say, "Aw, man, don't talk such bloomin' stuff." "I should say there was no fear of anything of the sort. Devil a bit need you be frettin' yourself." "Why, you're as likely as not to see the half of us down. You're lookin' finely to-day." "It's not the stout, hearty-lookin' people that's the strongest, by any manner of means." "You'll be right enough, once you've got shut of that ugly cough." "I've a sister coughin' that way these last dozen years, and it's never done her a ha'porth of harm," with much more to the like consolatory effect. Christy, on the contrary, acquiesced in the likelihood

of the event, without apparently considering the subject one to be started away from as insufferably frightful; and this attitude was soothing and reassuring to Nicholas.

"Do you think your mother would be willin' to undertake the charge of those two children whenever they're left? I don't know of anybody I'd sooner they were with. She had always a good-natured way with children. And your aunt Ally seems to be a nice young woman."

There was a pause before Christy's reply, and then, though it ran, "I'd not say that she wouldn't," a suppressed *but* could be easily understood.

"They're not over-troublesome children," said their father. "Mostly, they're peaceable enough. Delia was a bit fractious this evening. I can't account for her screeching that way, unless you attribute it to her being upset with the long journey. I never knew her do it before. But your mother's used to bringing them up, and knows they're bound to be a little humoursome now and again. Bernard, now, he's an uncommonly quiet little chap, I'll say that for him; and a fine scholar."

Again Christy seemed to hesitate with his answer, and this time the "but" was verbally expressed. "I don't doubt they'd get good thratement," he said, "as far as that goes, for if me mother might be a trifle conthrary in her temper of an odd time, like another, she's not a very wicked woman at all. But what I was thinkin' is: You see, this is a poor place entirely to be bringin' childer to, and they wid a great fortune." He turned half round as he sat to look down the huddled row of Port Maguire, which even under the veiled moonlight could not dissemble its squalid features. "Tellin' you the truth," he said, "there's no chances here. Sure they'd be hard set to as much as get e'er a bit of schoolin'; it's too far a thramp for any but the biggest, since the school over yonder was shut up a while ago. Terrible poor people do be livin' in it—we aren't, so to say, very grand ourselves. They'd do better wid some farmer that had a dacint little house, and a bit of reasonable land, and maybe kep' a cow."

"As for a great fortune," said Nicholas, "you must remember that they'll have to live on it for the next half-

dozen years at the least, and that'll make a big hole in a couple of hundred pounds. I had it in a concern that paid twelve shillings a month; but that wouldn't keep them, and I daren't meddle with any of those high-interest swindles that burst up oftener than not. I might see every penny of it lost before I went, and then—God help me! So I've drawn it out. And it's all very well to talk of putting them with better-to-do people—strangers, but what satisfaction could I have that their only notion wouldn't be how to get rid of the creatures and grab what they could? Take and insure them belike in one of those infernal clubs. They were starving a nurse-child at a place where I was stopping one time at Shadston, and, good Lord! the look of the little misery's in my mind this minute."

"There's quare people in this world," remarked Christy. "And for the matter of that, there's some of them in Port Maguire."

"But, look here, Christy," said Nicholas, "is there any occasion for you to be stopping in it?—yourself, and the rest of you, I mean. According to what you say, you might easily do better somewhere else."

"As aisy as seein' by daylight," said Christy; "it's gettin' away would bother us. You see how it was—me poor father, when he was a young man, he spent every penny he had in the world, and more too, settin' himself up in the business here, in the expectation of the fishin'-station there was the talk of. But when that come to nothin', where would there be any sign of a business, unless wid the say-gulls and crows? It's gone down, the place is, even to what it was. I remimber when there did be neighbours livin' over yonder, just back of the sandhills, that's as lonesome now as the middle of the bare sky. So he had a great disappointment over it. I've often thought that was the raison, if he took—Frettin', he was, at all events, while he lived. And now we've a terrible high rint to be payin' for the house."

"And makin' nothing by it?" said Nicholas.

"Makin' the wrong way, bedad; we'd a right to lave the shop alone, but me poor mother's wishful to be keepin' it up, because it's what she's used to this long while, forby she has the notion that then she'd be doin' nothin' at all. And a sort

of pride she has when she's layin' in the stores—a big biscuit-tin and such, though a dale of it just goes to loss on us. It's a contintment to her, and 'twould be a bad job if she took to frettin'; we get along one way or another. There's whatever crops we persuade out of the field, and whiles Ned and I git a turn at the fishin', and me aunt Ally earns a good few shillin's of an odd while at the crochee work: but that's what I think bad of us to be takin' off her, because its savin' up for herself she ought to be, while she has the sight of her eyes."

The soft, insistent stress of the rising west wind, and the wide waters' rhythmically recurrent onset under the moonlight, wavering in and out down a high-pitched vault, seemed somehow to strengthen Nicholas's sense of a certain incongruity between these small details of domestic economy, and the stalwart youth who was relating them as the framework of his life. He himself would not have put up with them, the older man reflected, when he was twenty years of age. "And have you never thought yourself," he said, "of leaving and trying to make your way where you'd have better chances?"

"Is it thought? Och, bad luck to thinkin'," Christy said. He suddenly began to whistle under his breath, and kicked the loose stones at his feet as he stared out into the floating dusk. "I couldn't tell what might be happenin' them, that's it," he said. "If anythin' went agin them, or Ned, they'd aisy starve—a couple of women. You see, we're all livin' here like as if it was on the black edge of everythin'. Unless we keep a hold on one another, we might niver git it again. That's what frights me off goin'. One of these days she might be streelin' along there be the wather, gatherin' herself a dirty wisp of the say-weed to boil for her dinner, the way I seen ould Widdy Mulcahy last winter, and disappointed of findin' e'er a bit at that. It's fool's work to be thinkin'."

"Well, but the plan I've been considerin'," said Nicholas, "was for you all to keep together, and just move out of this place to one where you'd be within reach of schools and such, and where you could get a bit of land to farm that was somethin' better than a patch thieved off the shingle-beach. You wouldn't need to go any great distance

for that. I saw as kind-lookin' land down yonder all about Burrinragh as you could wish."

"But every fut of that countryside's under sheep and cattle," said Christy, "every fut, except where the stones is too plinty. We've heard tell it's mostly all let to a gintleman in England. Anyway, they won't have people on it, that's sartin'. They're puttin' tenants off it every day. I'm tould there's great prices gettin' these times for sheep, so they do be grudgin' every scrap of feedin' away from them."

"In my humble judgment," said Nicholas, "there are some travellin' in first-class compartments that may likely have trouble when it comes to taking the tickets, with their sheep and all the rest of it. However, it stands to reason, lad, that there's a decent little holding to be had somewhere, provided you'd got the means; and since you'd be moving for the convenience of the children, of course I should expect to do my part in the matter. What my mind's set on is the two of them bein' with good-natured people while they're small, and the little chap gettin' his chances of an edication. After that, supposin' there was a small sum in hand to give him a start, he'd make his way and do credit to his bringing up, unless I'm mistook in him, and his teacher too. He's a great opinion of the young rascal. There wouldn't be much bother either about getting Delia some little place, or maybe your aunt would teach her the work she's doin'. Then, suppose I was stopping with you a bit after all, as long as I was to the fore there'd be my pension coming in to help. I don't see but what it might answer right well. What a young chap like you wants is something he can put his work into, and see it coming out again, and that's what you haven't got here on this brash of stones and water. Isn't that so?"

As Nicholas hurried on with his plans against the obstruction of breath-taking physical difficulties, which seemed to exaggerate his real eagerness, a reflection of it kindled in Christy's eyes.

"For the matter of that," he said, "there's nought I'd be better plased at than the chance of such a thing. I've

no love or likin' for this place that I'd make a compliment of quittin' it, and I don't doubt that the others 'ud be of the same opinion. There's Glenore, a place no great way off beyond Fintragh Point; a man was tellin' me the other day that the people livin' in it is wonderful well off—houses and gardens, he said they had—me mother'd go mad if she got into a garden, she's that foolish wid flowers. Or if she'd ever a cow, or a few hins itself, she'd be very content widout the shop, and the childer'd be fine company to her. But all the same, sir, I wouldn't be spakin' of it to her, if I was you, yet awhile, till you've looked about you a bit, and seen the way things are. 'Twould be a great pity to spoil the crathur's chances, if you thought of anythin' better, it would so. And sure you're intindin' in any case to stop some while wid us, Mr. Conroy?" Mr. Conroy's young host proceeded with courteous cordiality. "There'll be plinty of time for considerin'. But now I'm thinkin' we'd a right to be steppin' inside, for the night's turnin' a thrifle soft."

Christy referred to the fact that miniature raindrops were beginning to flick their hands and faces. Dark clouds had swept up swiftly to seaward, and were threading themselves in and out among the white as if following the throw of some vast invisible shuttles. The moon ducked and blinked ever and anon as a strand of the drifting web caught her, but she still held up a fairly steady lamp to light the weaving.

When they stood up to go, a hum of voices reached them from among the boulders on the other side of the pier.

"That's ould Widdy Mulcahy at her prayers," said Christy. "She's said them out there ever since her sons was dhrownded on her. I've seen her there in weather when the wind 'ud ha' took her off her feet, if she hadn't fitted herself in tight between a couple of thim rocks, like a stopper in a bottle. We do be tellin' her the prayers 'ill on'y get blown away on her, God knows where, before they're well out of her mouth; but she comes along all the same. Belike that's where she wants them to go. And I think there's some of the Egans and MacSheehans sittin' over yonder. They stop up as late as they can these times to shorten

the night, for the both of their houses is thronged wid sickness."

Just as they reached the door a loud noise began at the other end of the row—a drunken wrangle, apparently, moving along it with bawls and angry screeches. Then there was suddenly a sound of thumps, followed by a piteous, terrified howling, that seemed to flee away towards the edge of the beach. Christy, who had run a few steps in the direction of the disturbance, came back, saying, "I'll have it out wid them bastes to-morra, when they won't know the raison, and that'll be all the better for *him*. But it 'ud be a charity if somebody could be givin' that Biddy Cuddihy a talkin' to she'd remimber, for she's got as bad as the rest of them." He added some expressions, which were forcible, even for Port Maguire, where strong language abounds, being one of its few cheap luxuries. "It's a cripple he is, and not much better than an innicent," Christy informed Nicholas in explanation, and said little more before they parted for the night.

But some time afterwards Nicholas, who was wakeful with weariness, perceived a sound of voices going on beneath his small window, and at last, irritated by their long-continued indistinctness, got up in a fidgety fury, and looked out through a broken pane. The night had darkened into heavy rain, and there was hardly light enough to show two people sitting on the stones at a little distance; their conversation, however, could thence be clearly heard. One of them was arguing with and coaxing the other, who replied with heart-broken whimpering, which sometimes rose into sobs and wails.

"Sure no, not at all. That 'ud be the quare foolish thing to go do, when to-morra'll maybe be a grand day altogether, and everybody as plisant as anythin', and you to be drownded out of it away in the say. Ah, not at all, Paddy, but prisintly, in a little while, you'll come in paiceable, and go to sleep."

"What good's me life to me? I'd better be drownded dead, on'y the say's ugly and lonesome. But it's on'y murdered I am here, and I won't go in, niver again will I; och no, I niver will."

"Ah, well, sure we'll wait a little longer. And couldn't you be aitin' the bit of griddle-cake? Me mother made it this mornin' for our company, and it looked to be iligant."

"Och, Christy, I couldn't ait it, I couldn't ait a bit at all. I wisht I was dead, and I wisht everybody was dead, barrin' you, and Biddy O'Keefe, and ould Widdy Mulcahy."

"They'll all be quiet enough one of these days, man alive, no fear. You'd just a right to keep out of their way whin they've the drink taken. Sure, any night you could sleep in our kitchen and welcome. Do you mind the ould black cat used to be in it, sittin' atop of the creel, like a big sod of turf wid two greeny sparks at the one ind?"

"Maybe I might; I dunno, I dunno. It's the say does be ugly and black."

Nicholas grew tired, not perhaps unnaturally, of this eavesdropping, and crawled back into bed. But the sounds still came muffled to him, through his on-creeping drowsiness. Then a rough woman's voice called something from a short distance, and the shouted answer was quite plain, "Was you lookin' for Paddy, Mrs. Cuddihy, ma'am?"

"Ay, was I, Christy McQuaide. And where at all's the little shingawn thraped off to?"

"Here he is, ma'am, and sure you were the dacint woman to come fetch him in, for the crathur's scared, and fretted, and dhreeped wid the rain."

"Musha cock him up! How dhreeped he is! And what's to keep *me* dhry, runnin' out under the teems of it after him?"

"Sure the spark of rael good nature that's in you, Mrs. Cuddihy, I well know."

"Och, it's the quare things you know, Christy McQuaide. But come along in wid you, Paddy man. Himself's asleep, and there won't be a word out of them this great while, good or bad."

"If Christy'll be comin'."

"Ay, sure, I'll lave you to the door."

Steps receded on the clattering shingle, and Nicholas turned over with a sigh of relief, he scarcely knew why. "He's a good sort," he said to himself; "I'd rather than fifty pounds the children could stop along with him."

CHAPTER IV

THIS wet night was followed by a week during which a grey rain-cloud of substantial fabric pitched itself like a spacious tent over the shingle-spit of Port Maguire, and hung a quivering curtain before every gloomy door. It seemed also to lay a double fold upon every weak point of thatch. "If it's no better she is," Mrs. MacSheehan said one morning in reply to kind inquiries, "'t isn't for the want of fine jaunтин' about; for sure she travelled a mile o' ground last night, if she travelled an inch, wid the way we had to be shiftin' her round the floor, lookin' for a place where she wouldn't get her death drowndin' on dhry lan'. It's powerful soft weather we're expariencin', whatever's the raison of it." And old Norah Rooney, who was the tiller of a small furrowed patch, responded sorrowfully, "Ay, are we, bedad. There'll not be so much as a straight straw left standin' in me oats. But sure it's the will of God, so if it happint anyways diff'rint, 'twould be apt to be someways worse."

But perhaps nobody in the Row was so thoroughly dissatisfied with his surroundings as little Bernard Conroy, for whom they had all the rough edges and sharp corners of novelty. His general impression was that he had been transported into a cramped nook full of squalid discomfort, wherein most occurrences were either tedious or terrific, and from whence he looked back upon the pleasant order of his days at Aberglavany as if they had passed in an Eden, very clean and green and white. The loss of the business and amusement that had been supplied by his little cheerful schoolroom and playground, among gay garden-plots and bird-sheltering trees, left a dreary blank in the hours of his perpetual joyless holiday. He had a child's omnivorous

appetite for reading, and would have been contented in a nutshell with a kernel of print ; but here, so far as he knew, not a book was within reach, except his own old *Arithmetic*. He did produce this one evening, out of ostentation partly, and partly out of boredom, but nobody marked him, and it was impossible to interest himself deeply in the familiar exercises without any stimulating object.

Out of doors, in pauses of the rain, there was little to attract on the malodorous beach, and much to repel ; for the wild, uncouthly-speaking children who infested it caused alternate alarm and rage ; while Paddy Cuddihy, in his withered childishness swinging himself along with his strange vaulting gait, aroused still more painful sensations. Delia was faring better than her brother, inasmuch as Ally McQuaide had undertaken to teach her some crochet stitches, and the little girl had thrown herself into the new occupation with the eagerness of an escaping refugee. But her absorption left him all the fewer resources, so that he sometimes was driven to falling back for companionship upon the cockatoo. Jacko, however, being very old, and no longer well capable of adapting himself to adversely altered circumstances, sat moping on the floor of his cage, and for all conversation croaked "poor-poor," a criticism upon the situation candid rather than polite. Moreover, Bernard had caught a cold, which his grandmother would have alleviated with black-currant jam, the produce of their own row of bushes, whereas Mrs. McQuaide had no remedy to offer save those nasty peppermint lozenges of preternatural pungency, which scorched his throat with no beneficial result.

And the worst part of it all was that he could see no prospect of a change in these dismal conditions. Port Maguire had apparently become a permanency, excluding Aberglavany, a return to which he never heard mentioned, though he was on the alert for the slightest hint, and would have picked up such a crumb of comfort with a movement as nimble as any frost-pinchd finch.

What became his chief fear was that his father might not have money enough to take them back. He knew from many a grumble by the way that the journey had cost a

great deal, and he now sought more definite information upon the point, venturing to ask his father what was the price of a ticket from Port Maguire *home* to Aberglavany. But his father, suspecting the inquiry to be a symptom of some discontent, a malady which in the young requires homœopathic treatment, only with *large* globules, replied grumpily, "A precious sight more than you're ever likely to earn for yourself," an answer equally vague and discouraging. Therefore, in lonely brooding as the monotonous days dragged by, he evolved a plan which seemed to him lacking only in the elusive grace of practicability. The journey, he thought to himself, considering that he went for half a ticket, could not possibly cost more than a pound. He held the faith of his years in the capacity of that sum. And he felt certain that if he had another pound to offer her, the Aberglavany schoolmaster's sister, who lived in the creeper-covered schoolhouse, would willingly take him for her lodger, a highly privileged person, with continual access to the rows of delectable miscellaneous volumes on the low shelves by the parlour door. In view of that blissful bower, the clandestine flight from his kin which he contemplated, and the long, unprotected journey, had but trivial terrors for him; his grief was, that how to acquire the necessary two pounds remained an insoluble problem. Saving up was the only expedient that suggested itself to him, and his arithmetical proficiency showed him with cruel clearness its extreme futility. An afternoon spent in calculations produced disheartening results. Eight years and two months and two days were terrible to think of; and these were the facts he had to face. For his sole income was a weekly penny, which indeed had not been received since his grandmother's death. He earnestly hoped that in their more settled circumstances his father would now resume the payment, and he longed for Saturday that he might make a beginning of his sadly unpromising hoard. But the slowly coming Saturday, to his bitter disappointment, brought him no penny. Nicholas never once thought of the matter, not, of course, surmising its importance; and Bernard was so anxious to avoid the appearance of hinting, that he stopped short at dinner in the middle of a remark about to-morrow

being Sunday. It was a most serious blow, upsetting all his computations, and flinging him back upon mere chances, in which neither his temperament nor his experience led him to place any trust. Despondency, in fact, took very complete possession of his mind. The outlook was blank and black. What was he to do all day? How was he ever to learn anything more. Perhaps he would grow up into a person like that Paddy Cuddihy, who was equally dreadful whether those ragged brats of children set him off laughing or crying.

Now, the discontent of a small, impecunious boy may commonly be accounted an insignificant factor in the sum of circumstances; but the springing up of many-branched effects from a minute seed of cause is among the most widely spread of our everyday marvels; a very rag weed of paradox.

One evening, a few days after his financial disappointment, Bernard had strayed into the parlour, where, seated on the floor under the rain-beaten window, he was listlessly reading a bit of the old newspaper that had covered Jacko's cage, when his father, with Mrs. McQuaide and Christy, came into the room, and began to talk about business, evidently unaware of his presence. This somewhat dismayed him with apprehensions of wrathful discovery; still, he listened eagerly, laying down the paper for fear of a rustle, and fretting at the sentences which he failed to catch or construe. What he supposed himself to understand, however, chagrined him deeply, because it all seemed to imply their continuance at Port Maguire. For instance, "I've no doubt in my own mind"—he heard his father say—"that the best thing I could do for them would be to settle them with you, Cousin Julia." And Mrs. McQuaide replied, "They'd have the willin' welcome, the poor things, if it so happened the way you was sayin', and no fear but they'd contint themselves right enough, and 'ud liefer be stoppin' wid us, than go off among people that was no belongin' of theirs." Had she beheld the countenance with which Bernard received this sentiment, she might have felt some misgivings; but his scowl of angry grief came and went as fruitlessly as a cloud-shadow passing over the sea.

Then his interest suddenly became more intense as he saw his father lay on the table a grey leathern pouch that looked like a sort of purse. He should now at least be able to ascertain whether his father had the means of going away. So he peered as best he could, and though little was actually within his view from his low crouch on the floor, there were gleams and chinks and rustlings as his father emptied the pouch, sufficient to give him an impression of very great opulence. Besides, he heard his father say, "Yes, Cousin Julia, there's fifty in sovereigns, and the rest in notes. It's the flap here that is ripped, and that I thought you'd perhaps be so good as to put a stitch in." Then Mrs. McQuaide had promised to get a bit of huswife thread for the purpose to-morrow, and Nicholas had carefully refilled the pouch, when a tremendous crash resounding from the shop made them all start up hastily and rush into it.

The causes had been for some minutes wending their way thither in the shape of the brothers Joe and Tim Cuddihy, who, from the contrasting colours of their hair, often were distinguished by the neighbours as Black and Red. Neither of them was sober, nor had been so in any consecutive waking hours since their return a few days before from the English harvest. They had brought home with them five whole pounds and a broken one, which they saw fit to mention in the domestic circle as a trifling remnant, though as a matter of fact it had not lost many pence. The truth was that Joe had, with a kind of joyful compunction, found occasion to change it at Athlone station, with the express purpose of providing some semblance of excuse for an orgy, and avoiding the enormous prodigality of drinking an entire gold sovereign "cliver and clane." Those other five pounds they had lodged safely in a receptacle among the rafters, where the hoard would be inviolably guarded by a lively dread of the coming hungry days after Christmas, with potatoes running short and rent overdue. But the nineteen shillings odd, having been irrevocably dedicated to pleasure, had almost every one clinked into the till down below at Sweeney's bar. Notwithstanding their preliminary extravagance, the two Cuddihys set about their enjoyment with a species of thrift, impartially treating nobody, and

excluding even the other members of their household from any share. Their aim was the utmost prolongation of their bliss compatible with stimulants in sufficient excess to maintain it. But despite the moderation of their revels the bottom of their jar was inevitably reached. Fourpence at last was all that remained to them. Their disposition to quarrel over these paltry dregs had caused them to be hustled out of Sweeney's place, where the passing of the Burrinragh police patrol was expected, and they had repaired homewards in a smouldering mood. Tim, as his neighbours would have said, "had drink taken," but Joe was what they call "hearty," and the pennies were in his pocket.

As the brothers walked meanderingly along the Row, they carried on an altercation with a vehemence which, albeit as yet merely verbal, attracted not giddy-minded spalpeens alone, but their idle, distraction-craving elders, by the prospect of "a rael ould shindy." By the time they neared the McQuaides' shop, for which they were half-instinctively making, quite a crowd followed in their wake, thrilled visibly with a hopeful sensation at each more menacing bawl. The posture of affairs was that Joe chose to deny the possession of any pennies, and replied to Tim's reiterated demands for them with nothing *more* polite than "Go to blazes!" These demands and denials grew furious in peremptoriness just when the shop was reached, and finally Tim, having made a grab at his brother's pocket, from which he produced nothing except a jingle, turned to the audience, shouting, "Did you hear that, boyos? Faix, it's ringin' the man is like an ould church tower."

Then, planting himself suddenly in front of Joe, he stood up on his toes and roared, "Of all the *loiers*!" letting himself down with an emphatic jump. So Joe naturally retorted by hitting him "a clump on the jaw," at which the onlookers ejaculated gratefully, as if under some soul-satisfying conviction; and the fight had fairly begun. All too soon, however, Joe's foot slipped, and he fell backwards through the open door of the shop, with Tim on the top of him, causing the crash that interrupted the discussion in the parlour. Immediately Andy Egan, whose onlooking had been intensely wistful, snatched the opportunity to

asseverate that Ned McQuaide "was after trippin' up the man a' purpose," and in a moment the shop filled with fierce, silent boxers and spectators who wildly yelled.

It was a scene of savagery unparalleled by any that had come before little Bernard Conroy in his seven or so observant years. Compared with its ponderous ferocity, the small schoolboy skirmishes he had witnessed were but as the frisking of lambs to the contending of wild boars and buffalo bulls. And he felt painfully shocked when, turning to his father and his cousin Christy with an assumption that they would straightway intervene to end it, he saw them surveying it with an interest evidently not altogether unpleasurable. But presently Joe, all horrible to behold, flashed out a knife and stabbed Tim, who fell down screaming fearfully; and after this it was not only the huddle of women and girls who cried "Murder!" with dismay. The fight ceased at once, and after an interval the wounded man—to Bernard the ghastly object of staring, which had a nightmare's fascinated helplessness—was borne off homewards in a state so grave that messengers were speeding to summon doctor and priest. Nicholas Conroy accompanied the procession, his experience of several railway casualties making him provisionally the surgical authority. Joe, who was not in the least sobered by the event, had to be removed, struggling and bellowing, by a second party of neighbours. Ally McQuaide, who with Delia had been surprised and engulfed in the vortices of the fray, carried away the little girl, sick and dazed with horror; and Bernard, fleeing into the parlour, found himself quite alone.

He was quivering all over in body and mind, and felt as if he had been forcibly shown a glimpse of some horribly inferior other world; yet, at the same time, and this made the worst pang of his feeling, he saw with great clearness that it was only just part and parcel of the actual world in which he had now arrived, and where he seemed to be permanently settled. At this hateful Port Maguire such things must be expected to happen continually. Nobody would hinder them. Even his cousin Christy, whom he had thought so good-natured, had merely said, "Whoo—the bosthoun!" when Ned was knocked down flat, and Bernard himself

supposed him killed. This very house might always at any moment be invaded by a mob of wickedly mad people, like those he still heard noisily receding. Sights not less hideous would be thrust upon him as a portion of his daily life, from which there was no escape.

In his agitation some time passed before he took any notice of what was under his eyes. Then he suddenly perceived that the grey leather pouch lay there conspicuously on the table. And he decided what he would do as instantly as he might have rushed to get out through a door swung unexpectedly open, and about to swing shut again. The two pounds that he deemed necessary for a new start in life he would take from that store of notes and sovereigns, whose inexhaustible vastness would have almost stifled his scruples had he been calm enough to entertain any. It was so impossible that anybody could want them all. But there was nothing plainer than that he wanted two of them most urgently, for how else could he hope ever to get away? When once he had got back again to his beloved Aberglavany he would read all day until he had learned something or other that nobody else knew, which was what the schoolmaster called being a great man. Then he would of course have plenty of money for himself and all the others, and he would write and tell his father why nobody could like to stay at Port Maguire, and advise him to come home with Delia. And he would buy his cousin Christy a silver watch and chain.

But just for the moment this grandly simple scheme was a pyramid rocking precariously on its apex, a mere trifle might overthrow it. More literally it might all be said to turn upon a brass button. This fastened the pouch with some complication of screw and spring, the principle of which he did not understand, and upon which his tentative experiments had no effect; and while he was yet fumbling and twirling fruitlessly, he thought he heard someone coming. Once more, therefore, a fateful decision was urged upon him in a hurry. He must either take the pouch bodily or leave it, with the assurance that chance would probably never again give it into his hand. That seemed too tantalising a sacrifice to prudence, and he darted out at the side

door, his prize firmly clutched. There would be, no doubt, plenty of opportunities for replacing it by-and-by, perhaps before it had been missed at all. His hopes were, however, again frustrated, and deferred by the baffling button. It would not stir for all his fingering. Hidden among the boulders' clammy festoons of seaweed, he long sat in the rain wrestling with it more and more desperately, till at length he was interrupted by an unwelcome call summoning him to his supper, and he had no resource save to stow away the pouch in a crevice and obey. For more than one reason he had a shrinking dread of entering the house, but having done so, he was partially relieved to see that nobody had as yet noticed the disappearance of the pouch. His father, they said, might be expected to come in directly, being only delayed by the sensational event of a visit from the police. Bernard gave such a jump at the word that Ally McQuaide thought he could not bear any allusion to the late alarms, and she began to tell him anecdotes about an affectionate grey and white kitten, which she had owned when she was a little girl. But Bernard was listening for his father's step, and grudging every precious minute that he had to waste indoors. To swallow was as impossible as if the bread had been made of sawdust and glue, and leaving untasted his cup of strongly sweetened, milkless tea, he was trying to slip out unobserved, when Mrs. McQuaide, past whom he had to slink, put her hand on his sleeve, exclaiming, "Och, to goodness, Ally, I give you me word the coat of him's as wet as if he was after thrailin' it through the say water from here to Burrinragh for bait, and he coughin' already! Run off to bed this instant minyit, Bernard, or it's chokin' you'll be wid your death of cold took to-morra. I'll come up along wid you and fetch down your things to dry."

So upstairs he had to go, abandoning his last chance of preventing discovery. His want of success was hastening to show him the blackest aspects of his crime, and, sleeping or waking, it haunted all his night with doleful visions.

The murkiest of them was less dark than the shadow of coming despair that fell upon Nicholas Conroy when he found that he could no longer "lay his hand" on his capital. That was how Mrs. McQuaide put the matter, wishing to soothe

and reassure, but the phrase only brought more vividly home to him the high probability that other hands had indeed been disastrously laid upon it. Not till then had he fully realised what a world of trouble and fear he had shut out with his two hundred pounds. Though they had come to him so fortuitously, their continuance with him had not been fortuitous at all. Their undiminished tale represented many victories over alluring temptation. From the first he had resisted the craving to light up the grey blank tedium of his grief-stricken days with the excitement of speculations more extensive. He had folded away the columns of *Sporting Intelligence* in his paper as if they seared his eyeballs, but he could only crush down the unextinguished longing for a repetition of the thrill with which he had read: *Roycroft Handicap Hurdles, Papercutter 1*. Later on he had clung to his post through months of physical wretchedness, that he might be surer of keeping intact the children's fortune, which enabled him to face their future. And now, he might as well and better have pitched it all into the sea.

He gave it up for irretrievably lost to him from the moment when, hurrying into the parlour, where his memory most distinctly saw the pouch lying on the bare shiny round table, he found its place empty. Full well he knew he had left it there, but he tried desperately to conjure up a faith in the possibility of his having pocketed it unawares, and dropped it on the way to the Cuddihys' house, "So nothin' 'ud content him," Mrs. McQuaide used to relate, "but to streel out under the polthogues of rain to look for it along the street; standin' about in it for a great while he was, and he wid a cough on him like a body hammerin' an ould boat. Sure it was enough to kill the poor man twyst over."

With much difficulty he had at last persuaded himself that he must postpone further search until the morrow, and so went forlorn and chilled at heart to toss through a sleepless night.

His cousins' view of the case, though less hopeful than their professions to Nicholas, was really hardly so despondent as his own. They admitted to one another that with the house left the way it was, there might easily

have been rapsallions enough in and out of the parlour to have stolen anything in it twenty times over. "Me flesh creeps on me bones to think of it lyin' there so handy for Pather the Picker or any rogue like him to be gatherin' up promiscuous," Mrs. McQuaide declared. Their long familiarity with the neighbourhood tended to define rather than obliterate suspicions. The vague person or persons unknown, accused in Nicholas's mind, in theirs had a limited choice of names and habitations. For of the adjacent dwellings there were a few from whose occupiers a strict regard for the rights of property could no more be expected than from the seabirds which poked about with acquisitive bills on the tawny-podded weeds close by; and mention of these unchancy neighbours naturally occurred as the McQuaides sat up in the kitchen speculating upon probable criminals.

"I wouldn't wonder an atom in the world," Mrs. McQuaide said, "if it was that ould miscreant ould Widdy McNevin. And I've a sort of notion I seen her up here in the shindy; but the truth is I was that took aback when they got murderin' one another, I couldn't say for sartin' who might be in it, no more than if they were all the one pathron like a flock of crows."

"I'd scarce think now it could be ould Biddy," Ally said, "she's that slow in her limbs, the crathur; there's nothin' quick about her except the eyes in her head, and, bedad, *them's* the cautions. Many's the time I've watched her settin' off wid herself after somethin' she's spied on the strand, when sorra the thraneen could I see a sign of, though me sight's good, thank God. But you might heel a stockin' while she's creepin' the len'th of the street. It's apter to ha' been one of thim little spalpeens that 'ud go like your needle and thread, in and out and away wid him."

"If I wasn't after meetin' Tim Galvin and his mother this day away on the Loughadea road, and themselves is the discreditable lookin' pair, thramp where they will," said Ned, who was getting a very black eye, "I'd put it on them sooner than anybody else in the place—not but what there's some of the others 'ud be ready and willin'. Holy Moses! to think of the man knowin' no better than to be lavin' about

his money out of his hand as if it was a lump of ould bait ! The polis had a right to hear of it."

"Better wait a bit," said Christy. "If they come meddlin' around, whoever has it might make away wid it altogether in a hurry. Slingin' it behind the fire they might be, or into the say. But wherever it is, I'm afeard the chances are he'd be no worse of swallyin' every pinny of it he'll ever set eyes on agin."

"It's a poor case," said Mrs. McQuaide, "to ha' took him in here to be robbed that outrageous."

Still, they all had a latent impression that the very magnitude of the disaster would tend to hinder it from coming to pass. It seemed improbable that the stones and straws of Port Maguire, whose petty larcenies were necessarily of the pettiest, could securely harbour such a booty. The richness of the spoil would gleam out somehow, like a shebeener's untimely lights, to the betrayal of the malefactor. Thus they retired to rest, not without hope of what the morrow might bring forth.

But it proved to be the parent of further trouble. Not at all unnaturally, Nicholas had taken a chill in his questing out under the rain, and next morning he was so ill that his alarmed friends called in Dr. Moloney, who had come to visit the other invalids of the Row. And Dr. Moloney inspected him with more dissatisfaction than any of the other patients. Experience had taught the doctor to keep the details of his opinions to himself, but he did not attempt to conceal a serious view of this case. Indeed, no observer could doubt that the poor man was cruel bad entirely. His illness had become so preoccupying that he could only intermittently reflect upon his grievous loss, but it loomed blacker and blacker through his intervals of leisure, and when, as sometimes happened, he grew rather light-headed, it was the subject of all his rambling talk. Thus he lay in the small queer-shaped room over the parlour, breathing painfully, or muttering feverishly about the children he was leaving beggars ; and little could be done to ease or console him.

Downstairs gloom and forebodings visited everybody, from poor Delia, who turned away with the sick-hearted

disgust of anxiety even from her freshly acquired handicraft, to Mrs. McQuaide, who volubly avowed the gravest apprehensions while belatedly "readyin' up," and making tea for Nicholas. "Sure it was enough to kill him, and so I said," she repeated frequently, "gettin' himself dhrenched lookin' for it, and now frettin' after it the way he is, he's not givin' himself a chance, ne'er a one, for there's nothin' liker to be weakenin' his heart in him. 'Deed now, whatever villins took off wid it, as good as gave him his death, troth did they, and I wish somebody had the hangin' of them ; it wouldn't be very often a better job was ped for—the murdherin' robbers !"

If she had but known, these sayings were an additional torture to the very villain in question, who sat behind the big turf box, racked with remorse and fears, which tugged contrariwise agonisingly. On the whole the strongest of the feelings that drove him to shrink from the possibility of discovery even into the dolorous shelter of barbed self-reproach, was akin to what had made it seem easier for him to help himself to two pounds than to ask for a penny, at the risk of appearing troublesome and greedy. Immediate mortification was what he dreaded, and now the downfall of his character under the eyes of his cousins daunted him more than hanging or any other penalties, though they were not to be disregarded. Therefore the more he perceived everybody to be shocked by the thing he had done, the less could he dare to contemplate undoing it by owning the deed. Yet his sick father fretting himself to death was a thought almost equally intolerable, and its burden seemed to be visibly crushing the child as he crouched a small inert heap, beside the dark pile of turf sods. His cousins Christy and Ned, compassionating his miserable moping, further afflicted him with kindly attentions. Christy lent him a knife with which to whittle at an odious old stick, so that he felt bound listlessly to produce a few uninteresting chips. Then Ned would have him play a game of marbles, and that was even worse than the knife, because it obliged him to suspend the eager watch for an opportunity upon which he had fixed his only hope—an opportunity of bringing back the pouch unobserved, and leaving it in some con-

spicuous place. None such had presented itself all day, some inconvenient person always being about the door, and now he must squander the dwindled time of chances, in shooting clay pellets over the uneven floor. That game of marbles might certainly be added to the long record of those painful pleasures on which one may imagine the smile of an ironically disposed Dæmon somewhat complacently to rest.

But towards the end of it an inspiration suddenly came to Bernard, and changed the aspect of his world like a flash of sunrise. It seemed so simple and obvious that he could not help wondering why he had not thought of it sooner, instead of spending those long hours in wretchedness. For it was just this, that he could pretend to have *found* the pouch on the shore, and carry it boldly in. No more need for weary waiting and watching for a chance that most likely would never come. The instant that the game was finished he would run out, and immediately come rushing back with his prize. Everybody would be delighted and pleasant. In fact, he so clearly foreheard himself called a very good boy, that he almost felt as if he really were one. After that, of course, his father would soon get quite well; and never, never again in his life would he himself meddle with other people's money, not if they had cartfuls of it, and left it dropped about all along the road, like turnips off a load unskilfully built. This happy solution of all difficulties lifted such an oppressive weight from his mind, that he concluded the game in evidently buoyant spirits, and thereupon trotted off out of doors quite brisk and alert. Ned inferred that his well-meant efforts had succeeded, and said to himself that "the unlucky little imp was a good bit gayer, anyhow."

At the time when Bernard raced down the beach, the sun was taking a last wide look round through a narrow cloud-chink before setting on a wet world. Everything sparkled and glistened on sea and shore. The ripples bickered clear silver and gold. The shingle stones on which Bernard's hurrying feet often slithered shone preciously, and there were gleams as of polished tortoiseshell from among the folds of the heavy wrack festooning the boulders towards which he sped. When he reached them, he was at first a

little at fault about the right crevice, so many there were so much alike. Suppose he never could find the particular opening into which he had stuffed the pouch in the dusk of last night? Or suppose somebody else had already discovered it, and had left nothing to be found? But the scare lasted only just long enough to put a keener edge on the joy of the moment when he drew out the familiar grey, brass-buttoned little bag, plump and heavy as it had been when he thrust it in. Now he knew all he had to do was to hie back with it into the house, shouting that he had got it—found it down there among the rocks. That would of course be perfectly true. How very stupid he had been not to bethink him sooner that there was no need for him to say who had put it there.

So he had just stood up to set off when a hand touched his shoulder.

In utter dismay and confusion he wheeled round to see looking down on him a middle-sized, stout young man, very ragged, with a white neat-featured face of large and smooth contour, framed in light red hair, and wearing an expression of meek curiosity. It was Tim Galvin from next door but one, and he said blandly, "Musha good gracious, if that isn't the money-purse they was raisin' the whillaloo about! And what at all made you go for to be hidin' it there?"

Bernard did not answer, standing dumfounded, and entirely bereft of presence of mind by this rough shake out of his dream of security.

"Was anybody up at the house after sendin' you to fetch it?" Tim Galvin further inquired. And Bernard very disastrously faltered out the truth. "Nobody was," he said.

"Then just lend me a holt of it," said Tim more confidently, grasping the pouch. "I'll carry it safer than you—such a power of money. I'll reckon it to see is it all right, or if any of it might ha' been took. And then I'll be tellin' them where you had it hid away all the while."

"Ah no, don't!" Bernard said, holding on desperately to the pouch. "I'd rather take it back myself. Don't be tellin' *anybody*."

All his terrors at the prospect of discovery had rushed tumultuously back on him, and for the moment swept away

every other consideration. It seemed indeed as if escape were now hardly possible, since this stranger had found him out; and it was in a despairing frenzy rather than with any hope of persuading or intimidating that he stamped and danced and snatched about the young man, saying, "Give it to me, will you? Don't tell them—I'd liefer bring it back meself. Leave go of it—it isn't yours. Ah, let me have it." For Tim had possessed himself of the pouch, and for any impression he showed might have been a weed-clad stone, assailed by pygmy leaps of insignificant ripples.

"Whethen now," he said calmly, "it's fine and infuriated they'll be, I should suppose, when I tell them the way I found you hidin' it. Is it givin' it back to you? Bedad, then I hope you'll be well till I trust you wid it. But maybe," said Tim, making very sharp corners to his little blue eyes and fixing them on Bernard, "you'd liefer I kep' it meself and said nothin' about it, than me to be takin' it in and tellin' on you—would you now?"

"Oh yes, please," said Bernard in his craven panic. "If you wouldn't go in at all. Keep it as long as you like. Only you'll give it back to me before I have to go in, because, you see——"

"Hould your gab!" said Tim Galvin. "I'll maybe thry can I keep it quiet a while, just till I consider what I'd a right to do. But if there's a word out of our head, that minute I'll step straight in and tell on you. It must ha' been the Lord put it into me heart to come and look what you was at. For it's the awful wicked thing you're after doin'. So now you know. Keep yourself quiet, that's all you've got to mind."

"I won't say anythin'," said Bernard, whose face looked all eyes in his sorrow and affright.

"You'd best not—a dale," said Tim Galvin. He put the pouch into his pocket, but finding it threatened to subside through a very large hole, he slipped it under his coat, and then walked quickly away across the beach till he disappeared in a passage between two cabins. One can hardly refrain from following him and his newly founded fortunes, but the history of less successful speculations must for the present interpose.

Bernard turned homewards too, a small, woeful person, plodding tear-blind over the wide stretch of shingle. The sun was still bright upon his head, but upon all his hopes the blackest night had fallen. He was immeasurably worse off than when he came out. Something assured him that he would never recover the pouch from the "ugly big brute"—this was his mental phrase—who now shared his secret. Silence at the cost of every pound was the best that he dared count on with any degree of confidence, and though he had consented in the first paroxysm of alarm to purchase that at any price, he already began to taste the bitterness of abandoning all attempts at restitution, all chances of consoling his father, who must continue to fret.

Nicholas Conroy's fretting, however, had by this time drawn near its close, and before the next sun sank his friends saw clearly that he was not likely to be with them when the day dawned again. They were all sincerely grieved at his distress of mind, the means of removing which seemed even further beyond their reach than Bernard's. Ned McQuaide, indeed, wanted to "let on" that the money had been found.

"I could as aisy as anythin'," he said, "just stick me head in at the door, when he's about goin', and bawl, 'We've got it, man.' True enough it 'ud be for him that 'ud never stop to hear the differ; and 'twould hearten him up finely, and he settin' off. I know the very way I'd say it."

But the others objected to this device. "It would be a sin," Mrs. McQuaide thought, "to let the poor man go wid a lie in his mind. Bad enough it was to have had him robbed and heart-broke, widout schamin' to make a fool of him into the bargain." Christy was of the opinion that it would be no sort of thing to go do. "And then suppose he didn't believe you," he said. "It's a quare omadhawn's trick you'd ha' done then; as good as takin' it on him over agin."

Ned, therefore, was overruled, and had to content himself with vehemently protesting to Nicholas his firm belief that the pouch would soon turn up. But as he could give no reason whatever for his faith, Nicholas listened with blank looks, uncomforted and unconverted.

One time, after nightfall, when, with his mother and Ally, Christy was in the sick-room, where the feeble, hoarse voice had long been muttering sorrowfully about bad days in store for "the children," he made an attempt to offer consolation upon different lines.

"See you here, Nicholas man," said he, standing by the bed on which Nicholas was tossing, only a little way to and fro, like a wave that is just on the turn—"see you here, man, sure, if you come to consider it, wasn't it a bit of good nathur you was wantin' for the childer after all? And sure that's a thing you couldn't get them wid money, not if it was a couple of thousand pounds; and that same's a thing they'll get here, and no talk of money, if they hadn't as much as a couple of pence in the world. Ay, bedad, will they, and welcome. Sure who wouldn't be good-natured to them, and they as sinsible, plisant childer, the two of them, as ever I seen? And we'll contrive the little chap's bit of schoolin' ready enough, no fear. I'd very aisy get him the loan of a little ass to jog over on. You may depind he'll be a fine scholar one of these days. Why it's lonesome now we'd be widout them, and me mother'll say the same."

"Deed will I, Nicholas," said Mrs. McQuaide; "every word of it. Sure where else 'ud the crathurs be by rights on'y here, wid them that they're belongin' to? And if we'd any nature in us at all, good or bad, sure we'd not be lettin' them find themselves at a loss for aught we've got. Long sorry I'd be to think they was left wid the dear knows who, or may be wanderin' wild about the world and wantin' their bit of food."

"And so will me aunt Alice," said Christy, hastening with a nudge to curtail his mother's word-picture.

"And the truth I'd be sayin'," Ally said, standing up, gaunt and tall, at the foot of the bed. "For I'd always liefer have growin' childer about the house, so I would; they do be makin' things more reasonable like. And little Delia is great company to me at me work, and oncommon handy. You may be tellin' her mammy, Nicholas, if you think of it, that I'll learn her every stitch I know meself, till she's able to do the rael fine pathrons. Then she'll never be wantin' some-

thin' to take in her hand and pacify her mind wid, supposin' she finds nothin' better, but liker than not she will. And me sister-in-law's as good-natured a woman as you'd meet in a day's walk, and there's not two kinder-hearted boys than me two nephews in the County Mayo. So the childer'll be doin' right well, no fear. It's the good news meself or somebody 'll be bringin' you of thim one of these days, plase God."

It seemed as if these views of the situation were in some measure adopted by Nicholas, for thenceforward in his confused mutterings the word "good nature" was repeated more often than "money" or "beggars," and his restlessness of mind perceptibly diminished. And about sunrise he at last found the place where he could lie quiet, and Mrs. McQuaide woke Delia and Bernard to tell them that their poor father was gone, and "went very aisy."

CHAPTER V

THE week in which occurred Nicholas Conroy's death was a memorable one at Port Maguire. On the same grey morning died the Egans' eldest boy, who had long been "down wid the fever," like the rest of his six brethren; they, however, rose up again from their curious lairs, and were able to join in the lamentations over poor Micky's different fortune. "Och, but it's the iligant comforts they had for *him*," Micky's mother said enviously, alluding to a report about the number—maybe as much as half a dozen—of "limons" that had been used by the McQuaides for assuaging their sick man's thirst. "But sure, God knows I'd ha' got the crathur anythin' I could."

More sentiment of this sort, on a larger scale, was aroused by the arrangements for the two funerals, which were both celebrated on the Sunday. Comparisons were inevitable, and of course to the advantage of the McQuaides. Still, nobody could have denied that "the Egans' buryin' was very dacint and respectable," according to Port Maguire standards; and they themselves, though they turned wistful glances upon the greater elaboration of Nicholas Conroy's obsequies, would not have wished it to be supposed that they thought they could set up to compete with the McQuaides, who might well afford to do things in a grand style. "Sure wasn't hundreds and hundreds of pounds just after bein' lost out of their house?" Only it is not in human nature to forbear a few bitter feelings, when the marked superiority of your neighbour's coffin comes contrastingly under your very eyes.

But there are other privileges of wealth which assert themselves at such times, though they do not perhaps in general make themselves so keenly felt, because they cannot be apprehended, save by the imagination, vastly

and vaguely. And in the course of that long Sunday evening little Bernard Conroy happened to overhear part of a discussion which turned upon them. Several parties of the neighbours were out and about among the rocks at the sea-point of Port Maguire watching away the superfluous daylight, most people feeling more or less flat and bored now that all the funeral excitement was over. The mother of Micky, too, had come out for a little fresh air, but not wishing for society, had sat down with her mother-in-law, old Mrs. Egan, in a secluded nook a few perches from the McQuaides' back-door. It was a still, mild evening, the clear sky rounded off softly with haze, and the pale blue water scarcely rustling as it reached and touched the stones. Now and then it brought swimming over it a gleam of mellow gold which broke out fitfully from the mists on the far horizon, long after they had grown so dim that one would have thought they could hold no more light. Neither of the women noticed its coming and going. Their minds' eyes were fixed upon the same object—one small hoard of coins. But it was not mentioned between them.

"Ne'er a need is there to be prayin' for him," the mother of Micky was saying; "sure not at all, how would there be, and he no more than a little child? It's no time since he was running about there—I'd be seein' him runnin' in and out wid the others, not the size of anythin', in his bits of petticoats. 'Deed there was no age to speak of on him at all."

"He was thirteen year of age," his grandmother said solemnly.

"And sure what sin would a child on'y thirteen year ould have the sinse to be committin'?" said his mother, "that people should be sayin' masses for him more than for the birds in the hedges? Sorra the tint of harm was in him. A rael good child he was to his daddy and mammy—a rael good little child!"

"I wasn't spakin' a word agin him, God knows," said the old woman, "but it's noways natural to suppose that he lived that long widout e'er a fau't, as good as he might be; it is not. That's what I was thinkin', and it 'ud be a quare thing, if there was a thrifle saved, to be grudgin'."

"*Grudgin'*?" said Micky's mother. "What talk was there of *grudgin'*? But och, woman dear, me heart's broke. There's them other crathurs now, as wake as wather after the sickness; it's the bit of strong food they're wantin', if they could come by it, to put the life in thim agin; and afeard I am to be meddlin' wid anythin' we have saved up agin what's comin' due in November. 'Twould melt away like a sugar-bag that's got wetted, and then we might all be thrown out on the side of the road before we knew where we were. Sure I'm moidhered wonderin' what to be at sometimes. Rich people like the McQuaides can spend what they plase. But Micky, me little crathur, he couldn't ever ha' done a bad thing. It's innicent he was—he was innicent. There's no call to be prayin' for him."

To this point their conversation had an eavesdropper, as has been said, in the person of Bernard Conroy. He had been rather peremptorily advised by busy Mrs. McQuaide to "take a little run with himself out on the strand," and lacking will power either to refuse or comply, had effected a compromise by taking the first convenient seat outside the house. For some time the sound of voices was merely a noise to him, but gradually he began to listen and be interested. Not all of what he overheard was intelligible to him, but he gathered from it that a person of thirteen, which seemed to him a very mature age, could still be considered too young to be held responsible for his misdeeds. And if so, how much less accountable must be himself be deemed, seeing that he was not eight years old till next October! Bernard felt a faint glow of comfort from this sum in proportion; it came like a counterblast to certain cold gusts of fear that had been ruffling about him. They seemed to emerge from a lurid gloom revealed to him by instructions he had received about such things as States of Grace and States of Sin, and the strain they howled in his ears was an echo of Tim Galvin's parting words, "It's an awful wicked thing you're after doin'."

Hence it was a soothing relief to hear somebody assert the impossibility of his doing anything wicked at all. He peered round a corner of the rock to get a glimpse of the speaker, and saw a good-countenanced, youngish woman in a decent

black shawl. That her face was grave and sad, seemed to give all the more weight to her opinion. Undoubtedly she was in appearance far more respectable than the ugly, fat tatterdemalion who had expressed such reprobation. Perhaps this thirteen-year-old Micky might have done even worse things than intend to take a couple of pounds out of a pouch, and afterwards be afraid to tell where it was, though all the while he knew how his father—— That way lay a trouble, which had no apparent connection with states of sin and grace, nor could now be reached by any thinkable remedy whatever, except uncommandable forgetfulness. Yet a person subject to violent twinges of toothache might rejoice between whiles at the assurance that he was not, as he had imagined, in danger of becoming a leper; and Bernard's feelings were somewhat analogous.

But while he pondered upon what he had heard, another aspect of the matter presented itself to him. The mention of masses and prayers reminded him that he had often heard them spoken of as being in some mysterious way beneficial to people who were dead, and he knew that they cost money. Whereupon it occurred to him that if he had the pouchful of pounds, he could get plenty of masses for his father; gladly would he spend in that way every penny it contained. He supposed it now belonged to him and Delia, or maybe to him alone, like the watch and other things Mrs. McQuaide had said that she would put up for him. At the first moment the idea brought him a gleam of joy, for it seemed to show him that his father was not utterly beyond reach of his good offices; that there was a door of communication which might enable him in some measure to make amends. But all too soon he recollected how securely this door was fastened against him. He had grown so certain that Tim Galvin would never restore what he had grabbed away there on the beach. Although he had never since then had an opportunity of speaking to the young man alone, he had seen him more than once, and there was something indefinable in the expression of the placid pasty face that silently slew every hope of restitution.

Still, it was with a lingering phantom of one that presently, the womens' voices having ceased, Bernard got up, and

began to walk slowly down the deserted-looking Row. He was thinking that if he happened to meet Tim Galvin by himself he might summon up courage to say a word about the pouch. Not the word which came uppermost in his mind when he thought of the transaction, for that was indeed a vigorous and unconciliatory epithet, but some hint carefully couched in terms that could by no means irritate the enemy into executing the frightful threat of "telling on him." It was just possible that the new fact of his proprietorship, cautiously communicated, might produce some desirable result; at all events the experiment would be worth trying. If he could recover even a pound or two, it would be a great matter, for then he could get, surely, a few of those wonderful masses, and he did not know how efficacious even one of them might prove. As for his plan about travelling back to Wales, which had been the cause of all this trouble, it had dropped out of his mind; he seemed in that interminable week to have lost all energy and enterprise.

The opportunity he was on the look-out for did come to him in the course of his short walk, though in an unforeseen shape. As he was passing the Galvins' habitation, Mrs. Galvin suddenly started into the black doorway, and waved him over to her with a mysterious peremptoriness. She was a small, lean woman, in doughy complexion like her son, but her features were as sharp as fragments of pottery, and her shifty, china-blue eyes had none of his calm, being in perpetual, and sometimes contrary motion. She wore a lilac print gown, with no shawl over its faded skimpiness, but she had on a small black bonnet, from beneath which appeared remarkably sleek rims of rust-coloured hair.

Bernard crossed the road towards her obediently, but paused at the threshold, notwithstanding that Mrs. Galvin had withdrawn deeper into her interior, and was still beckoning him on. He had never before made a call in Port Maguire, and he was a little taken aback at what he saw, or rather, perhaps, by what he did not see. For the windowless house loomed very dark indeed, and was also pervaded by unusual noises. A cavernous gloom lay between him and the hearth, on which the sods were only faintly smouldering, so that the daylight glimmered down

the smoke-hole, coldly and drearily, and made a patch on the black earthen floor. What struck him most, however, were some indistinct glimpses of a light-coloured object, which apparently was tossing itself about in the obscurest corner of the room, whence came likewise a sound of grunts and snorts. In point of fact, the Galvins' pig had just retired for the night, and was tentatively wallowing before he subsided into his selected place among the litter. His possession was a cause of some hankering among their neighbours, who would gladly have entertained such a paying guest had the purchase-money and small potatoes been an investment permitted by their circumstances. "Whethen now, it's no thanks to them to be living in grandeur wid a pig," Pather the Picker had once remarked with envy, "and their two selves gettin' shillin's from the ould one knows where betther than we every month of the year."

Bernard, however, being unaccustomed to similar domestic arrangements, felt a shock of disgust as he recognised the presence of the pig, and then it occurred to him as an explanation of Mrs. Galvin's summons.

"Did you want somebody to put it out?" he said, peering in at the beast.

"The laws bless us, and what for would I be wantin' you to interfare wid the poor crathur, and I just after drivin' him in to his bed?" said Mrs. Galvin. "Lave meddlin' wid him alone, but step in here for me to spake to you."

Yet in reality she scarcely knew why she had beckoned him. Her mind, naturally active and scheming, had been stirred into unusual alertness by Timothy's partial confidences about the pouch, and anxiety had become a stronger element in it ever since that morning at the burials she had seen Christy McQuaide in conversation with Sergeant Geary of Fintragh Barracks. In short, she was on the look-out for all signs possibly ominous of peril or chances of averting it, and hence the passing by her door of the small boy in black seemed to put in her way an opportunity of doing something, what she had not at all decided, towards making their position securer; and she grasped it on the spur of the moment. Her preliminary remarks, accordingly, were

merely what we call "sayin' for the sayin's sake," and had no especial bearing upon the matter in hand.

"And so you're after buryin' your poor father?" she said.

"I am," Bernard replied dejectedly.

"Ah, now, to think of that!" said Mrs. Galvin, rolling her eyes up round the dusky rafters in quest of inspiration. "It is a great and terrible thing to fall into the hands of the livin' God."

Bernard said nothing, feeling uncertain whether the reflection were intended to apply to himself or to his father, and finding it unconsolatory in either case. His scared look encouraged Mrs. Galvin to believe that she might venture to put more pertinent questions without much circumlocution. "And have you been talkin' to anybody now, about the little ould leather bag me son's keepin' for you?" she inquired, bringing her eyes down on him abruptly.

"I never talk about it at all," said Bernard, "not a single word."

"That's right then, sonny," said Mrs. Galvin; "'twould be an outrageous bad boy would do such a thing, when me poor son's throublin' himself wid the charge of it."

This expression of approval somewhat emboldened Bernard in his turn. "If he was gettin' tired of keepin' it," he ventured to suggest, "I'd just as soon have it now myself. It's belonging to me, you know, and maybe to Delia."

"*What* was that you said?" Mrs. Galvin replied in a low, amazed roar. "Talkin' of who it's belongin' to, and wantin' it back, are you? Is that what you're at?"

"I wasn't talkin' about anybody—I wasn't wantin' it," Bernard said, withdrawing in confusion. "If he'd give me a couple of the pounds maybe—some time—so that I could be gettin' the masses, he could keep all the rest always."

"Oh, it's wantin' to go shares you are?" said Mrs. Galvin, genuinely taken aback at this symptom of shrewdness. "Whethen now, yourself's the cute hand, as little as you are. And to have everybody passin' remarks, and axin' where you got it from. Musha, we'd be the fine fools. But I declare to the great goodness," she said solemnly, rolling her eyes again, "I dunno what sort of devilish crathur you can be at all, to come bawlin' into dacint

people's houses wid the like of such scandalous notions in your head. And if there's another word out of you——"

"What blatherin' have you there, y'ould ape?" said a drowsy voice from a dark nook somewhere between the hearth and the pig. Mr. Timothy Galvin, who had been dozing there, half roused himself, and half sat up. "Hould your gab, and lave the brat alone!" he said; "I tould you he's afeard of his life to be lettin' out a word."

"It's more afraid I'd have him," said Mrs. Galvin, "afraid of his life and sowl he'd a right to be; I'll just put him on his Bible oath to hould his tongue. Look here, sonny, and then you may run off wid yourself, say: *Hell's everlastin' blazes to me immortal sowl, if ever I let on to any person in this world that I know anythin' about what's gone wid the lost purse, or what trifle of money might be in it.*"

"Och, be aisy there wid your ould antics," Tim protested in a lazy murmur, but as he sank back on the floor again, his mother heeded the interruption no more than his neighbour's fitful grunts.

"Say it!" she commanded, holding Bernard by the shoulder. "*Hell's everlastin'——*"

Bernard repeated the imprecation in a childish, half-crying voice, which some people might have thought rather pitiable, but Mrs. Galvin said with complacency, "There, that's a nice curse. So now you know what's bound to happen you, unless you're a good child and keep your oath and hould your tongue. And you may get along wid yourself as soon as you plase."

As she saw him dart out of the door she felt so elatedly conscious of having done discreetly that she began to hum a hymn-tune in a creaking, disused voice over her work. She was engaged in clearing out the wall niche that contained all her private property. The hoard of a magpie residing in a region of poverty-stricken rubbish heaps might have been supposed likely to resemble its contents. They fitted easily into the blue cotton handkerchief which was her travelling-bag. For the Galvins intended a speedy flitting, and had unostentatiously begun their small preparations.

Bernard, bereft of his last hope, wandered aimlessly on to the shingle beach, and seeing a number of children about would have retreated indoors had he not casually met Delia, with whom it seemed less trouble to go along. They were not molested, for their young neighbours held aloof, regarding them with a kind of awe as distinguished persons, who "were just after buryin' their father." Only the ruddy-haired girl, Biddy O'Keefe, beckoned from a little distance to Bernard, making signs that she wished for some private communication with him. But he could imagine no ensuing advantage, and his late experience did not encourage him to obey a waving hand. So he pretended not to see it.

The brother and sister soon went into the house, where the lower rooms just then happened to be empty, a circumstance which somehow filled them both with a vast dismay and melancholy. Old Cocky, asleep on his perch in the kitchen, was the one vestige of comfort, and they both made for the cage as if it were a poor sort of oasis amid leagues upon leagues of solitary desert. Bernard said, "Let's wake him up." But Delia replied, "Granny always said he didn't like it. Maybe he'll waken of himself." So they stood close to the bars, and wished that he would.

Their cousins meanwhile had joined those little knots of grown-up people who were sitting out to gossip among the boulders, where the sea crept towards their feet almost as silently as the dusk thickened about their heads. As the events of the day naturally supplied the topic for most of their discourse, it was natural too that moral and philosophical reflections should be abundant. Indeed, in places like Port Maguire they are at all times readily forthcoming, and need no such especially impressive occurrences as two funerals to evoke their production. To the mental atmosphere of the neighbours they seem as congruous as the odour of turf smoke on the air, and people have a habit of confining their talk to subjects either very large or very little, in a way not customary where material suggested by the miscellaneous interests of life is less meagrely supplied. A community situated where hardly anything is plentiful except space and time may often fall short of varied ingredients for small-talk, and be prone to eke out deficiencies by resorting

to themes of cumbrous magnitude, the transitions to which are managed with an abruptness unsanctioned by the rules laid down in any art of conversation. Though on to-day's special occasion it was of course only befitting that a pensive tone should predominate in their talk, this was ordinarily Port Maguire's most light-hearted season, this lingering autumn of summer, when the weather has a forbearing mood, and neither chills nor scorches, neither drenches nor blusters, which makes a wonderful difference to people whose roof is so very far from water-tight that silvery falling stars of raindrops often pierce the blue smoke canopy beneath it, and whose crazy boat looks like an upbraiding reminder of wreck upon the face of the blandest sea. Winter indeed lies ahead, but everybody can hope that it won't be too bad a one, and that the harvest will be good enough to put them over the dark months somehow or other, so that there is no hurry to think about starving until the days begin to lengthen again, a long way off. "And sure, for anythin' we can tell, the half of us may be gone after poor Micky Egan agin Christmas, let alone Easter," Thady Sheehan now suggested, as a not apparently altogether unsatisfactory solution of the supply question which somebody had raised. "Or else the mackerl"—he added this alternative without change of tone—"might take it in their conthrary heads in the spring to come along the coast the way they used."

"Och, the coast's nothin' to what it was widin me own recollection," said his brother-in-law, Matt Rourke. "Bedad, now, it isn't the same at all. I remimber the time the big American boat went down off the Lisforawn Rocks—from Halifax she was. And the strand over there beyond Glasfintragh was ridic'lus to behold; as red as a strip of poppy field for better than a couple of mile along it, wid the apples that was in her. Apples and bacon was her cargo. 'Twas a small amount of the bacon ever come ashore on us, but the red apples did be bobbin' in wid the tide accordin' as the barrels they was packed in went to pieces. And begorrah, every spalpeen in Glasfintragh, and plinty more besides, 'ud be yellin' down on the strand like say-gulls, fishin' them in, no matter what time of the day or night so happint to be high water; some unhandy time

'twould mostly be. But I mind one soft mornin' meetin' me uncle Shawn Riordan peltin' up, and sez he to me he was lookin' for me to lend him a hand wid carryin' home a barrel of bacon. 'It's away down below on the reef there,' sez he, 'and I left little Larry mindin' it.' So we legged it down to the beach, and, sure enough, there was the barrel, but ne'er a sign of Larry. For in the meantime, you must know, one of them drowned sailors had come washin' in, as close to it as I am to you," said Matt Rourke, laying a hand on the knee of his nearest neighbour, who was Christy McQuaide. "And very belike the crathur was consternated wid the looks of him, as many a one might be; anyway, he was run off wid himself, and left the other mindin' it. And sure he done as well as anybody. The lads had no notion but 'twas a one of ourselves. That Larry was the quare little codger. Divil a fut from that day would he go after the apples, nor so much as look at a one of them at all, whatever fantigue he'd took. But as for the barrel of bacon, when we come to lift it, 'twas all stove in on one side, and the most of anythin' was in it clane destroyed."

"Ah, now, that was the cruel pity," said elderly Mrs. Cuddihy, as vividly realising the keenness of such a disappointment as though half a century had not dulled its edge. "'Twould ha' been a great stand-by in the winther. Sure, now, if you had a good lump of bacon in your house any time, you needn't be afeard of the sun rainin' or the clouds shinin', as the sayin' is, you'd be in that comfort."

Mrs. Sheehan, the gaunt, youngish matron who sat next to Mrs. Cuddihy, had met with experiences which made her sceptical about such a panacea. "'Twould be quare then if somethin' didn't conthrive to go agin you, bacon or no," she said, with some bitterness; "'deed would it, the dear knows. Sorra the much use the likes of that 'ud be, when there's a body lyin' sick, and scarce able to swally a drop of the drink she's cravin'. The world's not so aisy rightified as all that comes to, and weary on it for a throublesome ould glory-houle."

"Well, tubbe sure," Mrs. Cuddihy said, rather affronted at this criticism upon her theory of life, and snatching up

a ponderous argument to retort with—"well, tubbe sure! But it's maybe nigh good enough for the likes of us, considherin' that our Lord thought it none too bad to put up wid Himself for a while."

"I'd be long sorry to think He ever put up wid Port Maguire," said Mrs. Sheehan. "'Twould be a poor case for us if He was contint wid it. But He never set fut in the aquil of it, you may depind, or He wouldn't ha' left it the way it is on us. Sure, there's not so much as a sup of clane wather to be got in it."

"Och, ma'am dear, there's worse places than Port Maguire in this world, bedad is there, and worse people," said another youngish woman, with a look of half-scared reminiscence. Her experiences had included a sojourn in Oranard Union.

"It's a dale the two of yous knows about the world, good or bad," said her husband, Terry Sheehan, lately returned from the English harvesting, "sittin' in a quare little corner, and as much of it say as dry land."

Mrs. Sheehan knew better than to attempt a vindication of her worldly knowledge by verbal argument. So she was moved at least to emphasise her practical utility. "I'm done sittin'," she said; "runnin' in I must be to see if the crathur inside there is wantin' a dhrink or anythin'. She's cruel onaisy to-night."

The batlike flapping of Mrs. Sheehan's shawl away through the twilight towards the Row was a signal for a general move. People got up off their rough stone seats, in many cases with rheumatic twinges and stiffness, which they sometimes proclaimed with gestures and ejaculations farcically exaggerated. Old Paddy Egan, who was one of these humorists, floundered to his feet with groans and ostentatious difficulty, saying, as he faced homewards, "Ugh och—murdher alive—I'm kilt! It's a good job I haven't to be heftin' me ould bones that far, at all events." He pointed to a red twinkling light just visible through the grey nightfall a very long way off inland.

"If it's there you were, it's in a better place you'd be than here," remarked Rody Hegarty, standing by on a mat of slippery seaweed. "Yon's burnin' in Crottalmore, and

the land up that way's grand. Me mother's people come off that counthry side. Sure now there does be such a richness in the nathur of the soil, a man might make a livin' off a bit he could lep across, if he got the chance to come by the use of it."

"Chance how are you?" said Matt Rourke. "That's not the description of land a man need be settin' himself up wid a notion of livin' on these times whatever, not unless he was a baste of the field. Sheep they have on it now. It's them stones and the weeds and the furze bushes the people get the offer of, bedad is it."

"And themselves to thank for that same," an elderly grizzled-bearded man, who had been tramping past on the shingle, suddenly faced about to say. He was Shawn O'Reilly, a person whose opinion carried considerable weight in Port Maguire, because he was known to spend in literary pursuits much of the long holiday enforced upon him by a crippled arm. Shawn's library was most limited, and perhaps he read less than he meditated, "sitting at leisure and lacking a livelihood." But the neighbours held himself and his studies in high esteem, and now halted to hear his remarks.

"And themselves to thank for it," he said, "that asks anybody for offers and chances. Sometimes I think the whole nation of them's just clane dotin' and deminted; but they won't be so ever. One of these days the right sort of man'll rise up and spake to them; and there'll be no jabberin' and palaverin' out of him. '*Men,*' he'll say, '*here's yourselves and here's the land. Haven't these bastes been in it long enough? Why don't yous all get together and put them out of it?*' That's what he'll say, and I dunno will he be high or low, gentle or simple, but they'll mind him. It won't be in my time, anyhow; but it might happen, by good luck, in your's, Owen Kinsella," he said, addressing a very small, black-headed, brown-faced boy, who stood in his path; "that ought to be in your seven sleeps this great while ago, instead of to be standin' up there wid the eyes shinin' out of your head."

As O'Reilly walked on, "By the powers of goodness,"

Owen said, still staring luminously after him, "I wish in me heart they *would* get all together."

On the next day but one, the Galvins, mother and son, quitted Port Maguire for good, and the contents of the leathern pouch went with them.

BOOK II
OF EVICTIONS

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OF EVICTIONS

CHAPTER I

SOME half-dozen years after the date of these twilight colloquies among the boulders at Port Maguire, a conversation much less discursive—for time there was measured by guineas—occurred in the consulting-room of Dr. Smithwick, the oculist, of Melroche Street, W. It is a place where much news, good and bad, has been communicated, and on this spring afternoon, Ulick Hanmer heard some that concerned him deeply, told with almost the succinctness of a telegraphic despatch. "Give your eyes a complete rest for a couple of years in country air, and don't ever work them so hard again, and they'll probably serve you fairly well to the end of your chapter," said Dr. Smithwick. "But go on as you have been doing, and in six months you'll have lost your sight irrevocably. I hope a London life is not any great object to you?" he added, seeing that his patient looked suddenly blank and bewildered, rather as an animal might, from whom something had been mysteriously snatched away. Dr. Smithwick was familiar with that expression, and always a little irritated by it, because he had often found it a preliminary to remonstrance or protest, and sometimes to flat rebellion against his authority. But in this case it meant nothing troublesome. "Oh, as far as that goes," Hanmer said, in a preoccupied tone, "I suppose I could live somewhere else just as well."

And : "You're a lucky man," Dr. Smithwick said.

Dr. Smithwick said truly, in so far that he meant that his sentence did not involve a diet of bread and water, or,

perhaps, no diet at all. Ulick Hanmer had had the luck to inherit means which insured him against any such vicissitude, three hundred a year and his habits making him rather affluent. Still, this gift of Fortune, like most of those which come from that thrifty quarter, has its flaws, visible from certain points of view, and as in several other matters he had been treated with somewhat exceptional niggardliness, it were perhaps an error to single him out as more than relatively lucky.

Having become an orphan in his first year, he had spent the following sixteen in the North London house of a widower grandfather, who disapproved both of boys and schools, and felt that, in resisting the temptation to rid himself of the one evil by means of the other, he was acting very conscientiously towards poor Walter's only son. But further than that he did not feel called upon to go. He provided tutors, and shunned their pupil's society, which, in that large, empty house, was easily done. After five or six interminable years of much boredom, his nurses being commonplace and uncompanionable persons, Ulick had laid hands on the Alphabet's magical key to an interesting region of letters, in which he henceforth found the materials of his business and pleasure. Not, it is true, in quantities quite sufficient to fill up all the hours of his days, which, especially as the edge wore off the small child's insatiable literary appetite, became subject to flaccid droopings. For he was indeed a student made by circumstances rather than born. However, he supplemented his studies with long, solitary walks—contemporary comrades he had none—much occupied with speculations about the strange new world that was to dawn upon him when he went to Oxford.

That event synchronised with his grandfather's death, and he exchanged the dirt-coloured house in Hulbert Street for a trim grey quadrangle, bordered with sapphire-blue lobelia, and hung with softly-flushed tapestries of ivy-leaved geranium. He had been so prepared to feel very strange and queer among his new surroundings that he was surprised at the mildness of his sensations. In particular he had expected to encounter much difficulty in getting on with the other men; but after all it seemed to him that everything went

smoothly and comfortably enough. They were pleasant-spoken, cheerful people, with whom it was easy to keep up such conversation as might be required at meetings in hall or lecture-room. That they all appeared to him indistinguishably alike was occasionally rather inconvenient, but he lacked experience to recognise it as an ominous symptom. He soon had made many acquaintances, to whom he said the usual things with a feeling as if he were acquitting himself creditably at some insignificant sort of examination, and he assumed that nothing more than this was to be got from intercourse with this kind. It was harmless, but on the whole tended to tedium, except when taken in most moderate quantities, and with perhaps a little disappointment he decided that men were less interesting than books. So he turned his attention more and more exclusively to literary pursuits. Through his collegiate course he studied with success and a fair amount of satisfaction, and having taken a distinguished degree established himself in London lodgings, where he bolted into studies of his own choosing with the avidity of a far-driven sheep jumping the roadside fence into a clover field.

At Oxford he had acquired neither friend nor foe, and for two or three years after his return to London he remained socially in the same condition. Then it befell him and one George Murray, of Dundochan, to be snowed up together for thirty hours in a railway carriage, lighted by brief flares of charily-struck lucifers, and offering for refreshments half a small flask of whisky, two cigars, and three Abernethy biscuits. In the rough little inn near which they were dug out, the Scotchman being suddenly attacked with pneumonia through the miseries and perils thereof, Hanmer lent him a helping hand, and these troublesome days made friends of the chance acquaintances. No ordinary circumstances would have brought this about, as by that time Hanmer had come to regard social intercourse as a contrivance for robbing him of what might be valueless except to the owner, but left him poor indeed, and his elder, Murray, was more inveterate in similar views. Up in a little, much-out-of-the-way shooting lodge among the moorlands at Dundochan he had made himself a solitude, and not only called but found it peace,

and there Hanmer met with entertainment much to his mind. Though grouse would be the ostensible object of Murray's invitations, he and his friend probably shot worse and less than any other pair of sportsmen in the country. But they tramped vast tramps over the hills and basked long basks under the broadly beaming sun on spring mattresses of heather, or warm rugs of fine grass, aromatic with wild herbs. And after dark the small lamplit parlour would grow redolent of whisky and tobacco, while they talked on inexhaustible topics. Hanmer, at the close of his month's holiday, used to feel that he had been stretching himself at full length both body and mind. Also Murray's tawnily-tufted, blunt-featured visage looked in on him with a grim gladness whenever, as rarely happened, it had to show itself briefly in London air, and long letters went to and fro with tolerable regularity. In fact, the palæographical studies, among which Hanmer was beginning to make himself a burrow, had an outlet into a wider human interest.

But one morning, soon after his return from such a holiday, he received a very short letter from Dúndochan. It was written by George Murray's old housekeeper, who regretted to say that her master had passed away quite sudden and unexpected on last Tuesday week, and requested Mr. Hanmer to let her know what he wished done with the pair of boots he had left under his dressing-table, and an old book with his name in it, which she had found in the poor master's room. An early answer would oblige, as she was leaving Dundochan herself in a few days' time, and she doubted but that the boots were too heavy to go except by goods train. Hanmer had the book, which was a prized *Theocritus*, sent to him by parcel post, and said that it was no matter about the boots. For some days it seemed to him that nothing mattered much at all, and then he plunged into damp-stained vellum and tangled cursive script and microscopic notes more profoundly than ever. In them he remained immersed for a twelvemonth or so with a persistent imprudence, which could scarcely be practised unscathed, and about the time when in other years he would have been setting off northward, warning symptoms, aches, and dimness began to force themselves upon his notice, and at last hunted him through the November fog to Dr

Smithwick's door, with visible vortex-rings swimming before his ill-used bodily eyes, and clouds of murky menace drifting upon his mental horizon.

Now, although the blackest of these had been driven back by the breath which pronounced him in no immediate danger of going blind, a very dark time followed his visit to the oculist. Its obscurest period might be reckoned from the moment when he thrust away all his dumpy black note-books into a drawer of his writing-table, at which he had instinctively sat down on his return. For those shiny American-cloth covers contained the essence of what had interested him most during the half-dozen years since he had taken his degree; and, thought he to himself, was there so very much to choose between the loss of his sight and of all that he cared to see? And he wondered to himself what on earth he was to do next. The answer seemed slow in coming; and meanwhile his emptied hours hung cumbrously round him like the flapping sails of a boat when the fair wind suddenly drops down. 'Twas dull as dull could be; futile possibilities only—emigration, enlistment, and the like—went drifting through his mind, brushed away before they had taken shape. But a project, far worse than futile, that recurred to him more and more frequently as the days lagged by, could not be so summarily dismissed. It was that he should disregard Dr. Smithwick's warning, and continue to work as long as his sight held out. Doctors, he said to himself, were often utterly mistaken. Somewhat inconsistently, that view of the matter had a tendency to present itself most clearly whenever he was feeling the benefit of Dr. Smithwick's prescriptions; a return of his troubles generally heightened his opinion of the Faculty. Sometimes he tried to meditate emulously upon the achievements of sightless men—bards and scholars. 'Blind Thamyras, and blind Mæonides, and Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old,' with Milton himself at their head, well satisfied at having spent his vision on the task of hurling coarse personalities at his political opponents. Hanmer felt painfully aware that he lacked any such spurs. He had nothing to prophesy; there was nobody whom he wanted to call ugly names; he had no qualms about uninvested capital, nor could he persuade

himself that a treatise upon Visigothic Palæography was an urgent need of mankind. Yet, as his ennui grew upon him, he reverted to the notion with increasing frequency, until at last he stood upon the verge of an incline leading softly and insidiously back to the resumption of his forbidden habits. Just a look at that majuscule Gregorian Lectionary at the Museum ; half an hour's work by daylight transcribing those last few rough notes—he would leave off, of course, at once, if he felt in the least the worse. Using your eyes couldn't make them smart more than the infernal, smoky fog did, whether or no, and how were you to get out of it this time of year?

One day he did actually set forth, bound for the British Museum. The first thing he noticed as he pulled his door to was a blind man, by whom that street was often haunted, tapping a stick along the railings towards him, and it struck him as an evil omen. Though he crossed the street to avoid the meeting, he could not shake off the impression, and as he went along, he saw, or so fancied, an unusually large number of blind people about. He hated the sight of them all. But in the end he did not reach the Museum, because he encountered by the way a dense fold of fog-blanket, which seemed to smother his somewhat feeble purpose. So instead he got into an underground train as the quickest route home.

At one of the stations a little delay in the service gave him an opportunity for watching the exit of passengers from another crowded train. As they came streaming by his window, he listlessly noted the queer effect of this procession of faces glimmering nearer down the obscure vaporous vistas, till they grew under the lamplight from whitey-brownish blurs into human visages, for a moment, and then into featureless blurs again. Old and young and middle-aged, harassed and placid and cheerful, unlike yet like, he saw them pass without any intention of moralising the spectacle. There was nothing, so far as he knew, to account for the thought which suddenly flashed into his mind with the vividness of a strong impression on the senses. It was simply this: that as among all those passing faces, so among all the faces in all the world, he

could not reckon a single one that he cared to see. This reflection he at once clearly recognised as equally trite and obvious and morbid and inane; everything, indeed, that should exclude it from entertainment in a rationally regulated mind. But as if it had been a venomous little midge flown into his eye, its expulsion was less easy than desirable. From its intrusion among his more reasonable ideas it was not, he found, to be dislodged on the spot by recourse to theories about Happy Indifference, or the Vacuus Viator, or the Broad Mark for Sorrow; and the failure made him realise forcibly how poor he had grown since last year. Then he could straightway have excepted the familiar face of George Murray, and have returned contentedly to his Visigothic Palæography. Now he had neither friend nor hobby.

In his hasty review of his diminished resources a saying of his friend's occurred to him, and he recalled the occasion of it, while the railway-carriage clattered on with dimly garish interior through the malodorous mock-night of the tunnel. They had been sunning themselves, Murray and he, on an airy hillside, belted with gold and purple, in the eye of a spacious blue noon, and discussing the irremediable misfortune that had befallen an acquaintance. Murray thereupon had expressed disapproval of people who dash themselves down and die horribly in the front of trains, and the like. "But," he had added, "it seems a very different thing to take yourself off in a decent and inoffensive manner, when you've got an uncivil notice to quit, or find your surroundings made unreasonably odious. Undoubtedly the open door is sometimes the only cure for the smoky house. However, if you choose to stay in it, there's no use grumbling about smuts."

"That's a fact," Hanmer assented now, just as the train jerked to a stop at his station. A familiar chemist's shop lay on his way home. He turned in there and bought a small bottle of prussic acid, feeling the while rather like the hero of some threadbare melodrama; but the shop-assistant did not rise to the situation, and was neither dramatically jocular nor suspicious. The bottle cost ninepence. When Hanmer reached his own street, tapping up

and down there as usual was its haunting blind beggar, to whom he gave the change out of his shilling, a gift which so animated the old man that, quickening his pace almost to a trot, he drew his stick with sonorous arpeggios all along the railings as he continued his beat. But Hanmer went indoors, saddened, somehow, by the little demonstration.

Upstairs he found awaiting him a letter from his only near relation, a much older half-sister, who had long ago married, to the dissatisfaction of her family, a poor Irish dispensary doctor. Her wedding was a dim memory of his small boyhood, and he had never seen her since. They had carried on a desultory correspondence, however, and he had lately communicated to her his altered prospects and proposed move from London. This was her answer, faintly scratched in pale ink with an angular slant, and dated from Prospect View House, Kilcashel:—

“MY DEAR ULICK,” she wrote—“I was very glad to get your letter. I was very sorry to hear that your eyes are so bad. They say that cold tea is a very good thing to bathe them with, but it never did mine any good. I think you had better come over here and stay with us, and look out for a house. Our old cottage has been empty now for a long time, and it would be larger than you would want, as you need not use the front room where the flooring is so much worn or the one upstairs that leaks from the roof. Our weather is very wet. Tom is very busy because of the measles being so much about in his district. He has been most unfairly used, and extra work put upon him, and not a penny more pay, though they have given Dr. Luby the increase of salary in Newstoneford Union, a man who drinks; but he has interest, of course, with the Castle, and we ought to have had plenty of interest too, one would have thought, I am sure. Archie and Sissy have had the mumps. I hope the others will not have them. I hope you will come. You could fish with the boys.

“Your affectionate sister,

“GERTRUDE S. MOLONEY.”

Had this letter arrived at any other time he would probably have read it with any feeling other than that it could

contain a possible proposition. But just then, while he was still shivering in the waft that had blown upon him from a world-wide loneliness, it appeared to him that even an unknown and conventionally affectionate half-sister might be better than nothing at all. He tried to recall her face, and not succeeding tried again to conjure up a belief that he now wished to behold it. But, at any rate, he inquired of himself, could life at Kilcashel well be more like a dull nightmare than it had become here? And would he not there be safer out of temptation to read himself blind? In answer to these questions he suddenly wrote and despatched an acceptance. Then in the overplus of his leisure he carried out a dismal little conceit, inscribing on the cautionary orange label of the poison phial: "A door-key of the Smoky House," before he put it away in a secret drawer of his desk.

In quitting London Ulick Hanmer had scarcely more of business to transact than of pleasures to forego. Under the former head came the returning of a book sent to him for review by Professor Jeffares, sub-editor of the *Scribe*, as well as of the *Endless Sabbath*, and he was carrying it to the office when on the way he fell in with Professor Jeffares himself at the door of a restaurant, and got drawn in to lunch by one of those social vicissitudes which befall the unready white liar.

Professor Jeffares had been brought up in a Cumbrian Methodist parsonage, in the fear and love of the peoples' God, whereto he had loyally subordinated a passion which might otherwise have ruled his life, finding and probably keeping him rather poor. The millennium he dreamed of was a time when real literature would pay—in coin of the realm. Meanwhile he toiled hugely in the production of printed matter for the organs of middle-class nonconformity. But the labour he sincerely delighted in was what he lavished, for small pay, upon the *Scribe*, a struggling periodical, crowded with the highest culture, his contributions to which were written in a tongue unknown to his patrons in the *Endless Sabbath* and other widely circulated sheets. Therein he smoothed his grated feelings and salved one of his consciences, for, like most people, he had several. Just now, for instance, having found himself compelled by his com-

mercial conscience to inform the readers of the *Endless Sabbath* how he had sat up all night in tears over the poignant pathos of Miss Hutton's "Slum Symphonies," it was with a certain satisfaction that he had noticed the work for the current *Scribe* in a single line, which contained the adjectives *harmless*, *passable*, and *well-meaning*. Such solace, however, cannot always be enjoyed gratis, and in point of fact it was his wish to avoid an interview with Miss Hutton's solemn uncle, whose reproachful countenance he saw looming along the pavement, that had made Professor Jeffares so suddenly pressing for Hanmer's company at luncheon.

"You know this place? You'll find it wonderful value for your florin," he was careful to remark casually on the way in, that there might be no misunderstanding about the terms of the invitation. "And so," he continued, when they were seated, "you're off to wildest Ireland? I've a notion you might get material there for a few *E.S.* papers. I've seen something of it myself, for my friend Gregory's medical brother keeps a private asylum in that part of the country—not a very flourishing establishment, I fancy, between ourselves—and that brought us over there on a visit and tour a few summers ago. That extreme destitution is most effective when pathetically treated. The worst of it is that the superstitions of the peasantry and of our variorum sects are as oil and vinegar. Still, I shouldn't wonder if there were possibilities in, say, 'A Scripture-reader's Experiences,' with a few dramatic cases of conversion; there might be money in it. But I suppose something suitable for the *Scribe* would be more in your line. Something full of the Celtic glamour and symbolism. Unfortunately we can pay only seven-and-sixpence a column for that."

Hanmer hastened to disclaim all capacity for supplying either demand. Expedients for getting away quickly were occupying him more than Professor Jeffares's conversation, which turned upon the several literary celebrities who were just then patronising their favourite resort. He gave only a divided attention to explanatory notes upon one Randolph Julius, a stout, prim-looking youth, who was pointed out to him as "the author of that volume of Rabelaisian stories, *As Broad as It's Long*, as near as possible being

suppressed last spring, and now in its fiftieth thousand, slightly expurgated. We've been trying hard to arrange for a serial with him, but the agent put on a prohibitive price; a mistake in the long run, I fancy. However, Baker has secured him for the *Young Ladies' Christian Companion*, at thirteen-pence a word—reckless terms." The Professor interrupted himself to say "Good morning," as a thin little lady brushed past him, and sank down at an adjoining table.

"Oh, don't expect me to answer you coherently," she said, leaning on her elbows, and staring vacantly round the room. "For me you are only a phantom among a crowd of far more substantial beings. I—the true me—am really thousands of miles away, across an ocean. I am at the very height of my great scene in the 'Frisco gaming-house. It will be brutally realistic. Beetle-browed Jim has just sprung to his feet exclaiming: 'By Heaven! Bill, a man can't stand this coolly,' and then I had to break off and come away. The doctors warn me against prolonging such a strain for more than twelve minutes at a time. But I am in no mood for rational conversation. The children of my brain are clamouring all around me, and I feel that some of them are about to be slain. By the way, isn't it rather melancholy about Mrs. Carmichael? She didn't survive her last son very long."

"Poor Mrs. Carmichael was very glad to die, I think," Professor Jeffares said feelingly; "for I happen to know that her sales had fallen off most seriously of late years."

"I wonder what sort of royalties Oliver and Clint were giving her," said the mother of dream-children thoughtfully. "Oh, the menu."

"The stuff she writes," Professor Jeffares observed in an undertone, as she subsided, card in hand, with adjusted pince-nez, "sells a good bit just now—it sells."

"As I find I've got an appointment at——" Hanmer had just begun, when he was spared the fiction, for the Professor jumped and exclaimed, "By Jove, here's Jackson himself; business manager of the *Endless Sabbath*, you know. I hardly thought he'd turn up to-day. And do you know who that is with him? There, coming in at the door."

Following Professor Jeffares's eyes, Hanmer saw a middle-sized young man in very new clothes, with a large pallid face, bounded at last by reddish whiskers, and inquired, "What has he done?"

"Done? He's *making*," said Professor Jeffares, "making mints at company promoting and that sort of thing. I believe there's not a more rising man in London than Timothy Vittie. An Ulster man, I'm told, and comes of the poorest of the poor. Started as errand-boy in a little grocer's shop, and has branch establishments now all through the United Kingdom. I don't know him personally. Jackson told me there was to be an interview this morning about an *E.S.* article on some new syndicate. Vittie'll pay not less than twenty pounds for it, if Jackson takes my advice. I must see whether it has come off."

Thus Hanmer found his way smoothed to a speedy exit, which he made, feeling less than ever enamoured of life's practical details, and more than ever conscious that circumstances were combining to oust him from a retreat wherein he had dwelt peaceably aloof.

CHAPTER II

THE Moloneys' house at Kilcashel was a tall, cream-coloured building, whose front, dismantled of a thick creeper-coat that once had redeemed its original unsightliness, now reappeared, further disfigured by stained patches and unremoved holdfasts. Sombre evergreens grew about it in clumps and shrubberies, mostly of the dark and heavy cypress sort, that sway themselves and nod their round heads at one another portentously in windy weather. But the approach to it from the road ran across a wide treeless field, part of which was sometimes planted with turnips, a bit of farming always strongly disapproved of by Mrs. Moloney. Notwithstanding the turnips and other defects, however, the move to this Prospect View House had been looked upon as promotion in its day. The older of the eight young Moloneys remembered a time when they lived a mile further on the road towards the sea, in Daly's Cottage, a little square box, set down on the skirts of a bush and boulder-flecked hill, with immediate surroundings of very slightly modified roughness. Furze and trailing briers had contended stubbornly with cabbages and potatoes inside the garden fence, and now that the place was lying untenanted had reoccupied it in force. When the Moloney children happened to pass within sight of it on their walks abroad, they eyed it resentfully as an unworthy and discreditable residence. Their mother retained a more vivid memory of how she had seen it first on the wet evening of her bridal home-coming. An especially wild flurry of wind, rain-laden, had sent her fleeing indoors so overhastily that she was suddenly shocked at finding herself out on the hillside once more. She had run right through her little house, for it was bisected by the narrow footpath,

which at the threshold of the front door became a dark passage and at the back door turned into a footpath again. And at this end of it an uncouth old figure, ragged and barefoot, was curtesying and saying, "You're kindly welcome to Kilcashel, melady ; and och, but you're after comin' to the fine wide house, your ladyship."

In the following days many shocks of the same sort befell her. They were all, no doubt, such as she should have prepared her mind to meet, when she elected to fall in love with young Dr. Moloney at that tennis club, which *neither* of them, her mother's people said, should have been allowed to join. What could the committee, what her guardian, have been thinking of? But when a girl of twenty marries precipitately out of her own degree, she is likely to be rather behindhand with all her preparations. Gradual disappointment also came to her. She had thought that when once her marriage was an accomplished fact, her family would soon learn to acquiesce in it, possibly under protest, still without reproaches, and that eventually all the privileges of kinship would be restored and extended to herself and her husband. This, however, did not happen. The affection of grandparents, of uncles and aunts, is in ordinary circumstances a sentiment scarcely robust enough to bear any very severe strain, and though her early orphanhood had given her an exceptional claim, duly acknowledged, upon their kind regards, the Crawfords and Penroses had found that the line of least resistance lay for them in the dropping of their refractory niece, rather than in the taking up of the undesirable connection wherewith she had afflicted them, and they followed that line undeviatingly with ever-increasing ease. Poor Gertrude ceased to be censured, pitied, marvelled at, missed—in short, remembered, save intermittently and fitfully. Therefore it was not given her to regain the countenance of the old familiar faces, and to be in some measure once more the much-made-of niece at Shankil Abbey and Crawford Hall.

Dr. Moloney likewise sustained disappointment in the matter of that wonder-working interest, to the enjoyment of which he had looked forward as one of the many advantages accruing from his alliance with a girl whose con-

nections were what some of his own called "very high-up people." Possibly he had counted more upon this than he had quite realised, while he was what they also called "courting." At any rate, the suspicion that he had done so would have been an appropriate embitterer of chagrin as the years went on, finding and leaving him stranded in his remote West Country dispensary district, with never a prospect opening of the more elevated post which he had at one time dreamed almost ready for him to rise up and occupy. As it happened, however, that root of bitterness did not spring up in the Moloney household. Their hopes' slow dwindling had no marked eras to make special occasions for mourning and railing, nor had either of them the disposition that courts violent impacts. Much easy-going good nature characterised Dr. Moloney, and his wife's mind was in no sense strong, though it now and then displayed an unyielding tenacity of purpose, as fragments of flint may be turned up in a bed of soft loam. One of these was her resolve not to be acquainted with any except what she called "nice people," which, as the wide parish of Kilcashel comprised scarcely more than half a dozen families whom she could possibly so describe, and as of that number two or three scrupulously ignored the existence of their vulgar doctor's wife, made her visiting list extremely brief; an epigram upon the social shortcomings of the neighbourhood. And yet, even so, it included the Prenters, persons whom nobody would have thought of knowing, save on the principle that it is civil to call both at Church and Rectory. In carrying out her views Mrs. Moloney met with but little opposition from her husband. His own family, distant, luckily, in relationship and residence, were easily kept off. He was not inclined to disapprove of her giving herself airs, and though he could not grasp her principles, he did fully understand his own ignorance upon such points, while he firmly believed in Gertrude's knowledge of, as he said, "who's who and what's what." Accordingly he had relinquished, with a few unspoken regrets, the entertainment he had promised himself to find in driving his aristocratic bride about on the car to return inclusively their bridal calls, and he had likewise become wont to seek society at various

race-meetings and coursing-matches, where a natural propensity for gambling was strengthened inconveniently. He himself regarded his expenditure on the pursuit as abstemiously moderate, but then he was contrasting it with the boundlessness of his craving. Compared more practically with his income, it was a serious outlay, never justified by any results less illusory than a recurrent hope that luck might turn. This kept the Moloneys' establishment chronically out-at-elbows, and even when a legacy falling to Mrs. Moloney made possible a flitting from their incommodious little cottage, they merely continued to be so on a larger scale.

All these things tended to arrest the social development of the young Moloneys, more especially as from economical motives their education was entrusted to the National school-master, whom Mrs. Moloney spoke of as their tutor, and who gave them lessons thrice a week, in irksome afternoon hours, during which he habitually read serial newspaper fiction, while his pupils amused themselves in even less literary ways. For companions they resorted to their dependants—mainly the coachman, and the people who lived in the gate lodge—a kind of intercourse which involved none of the instructive give-and-take of association with equals, and which promoted the growth in them of a self-opinionated conceit, quaintly mixed with a gawky self-consciousness. Hence, in what they described as “company,” they experienced such tedium and terror, that upon the rarely occurring arrival of a caller at Prospect View House, the carpetless back stairs resounded hollowly with the galloping of the young Moloneys, as they fled in disorder before the invader's face. It will thus readily be understood that Mrs. Moloney's action in suggesting her half-brother's visit to Kilcashel was deeply reprobated by most of her family. Dr. Moloney, indeed, assented cordially to the arrangement, and, on the strength of it, ordered additional supplies of whisky. But her children vehemently reproached her for “bringing him bothering over on top of them.” And she had not much to say in self-defence, having given that little tug to dangling ends of circumstance with no clearer purpose in her mind than a vague sense that she might thereby happen to draw

somewhat closer again those old broken ties after which she hankered still. Since the arrival of Ulick's unexpected acceptance, she had herself been disposed to think her conduct rash, and she rebuked only in a half-hearted manner her second son's fanciful designation of his unseen uncle as "that long-nosed, poking jackass."

However, Ulick Hanmer, "loth to the loth," appeared at Prospect View House one misty December noon. An accident to the ceiling of the spare room had, to the relief of all parties, precluded his proposed sojourn there, and he was to take up his abode at Daly's Cottage without delay; but a luncheon had to be accomplished. Mrs. Moloney afterwards reflected that it had gone off, on the whole, very well, though she thought her jewels might have exhibited themselves more brilliantly had they confined themselves less strictly to monosyllables in answering the remarks politely addressed to them by the stranger. Still, she had hardly yet begun to expect more of them than that they should be "quiet and good." Kenneth, her eldest, who was seventeen last birthday, made the only attempt to shine conversationally.

It was in the midst of a slightly terrible pause that he abruptly nudged his neighbouring sister, Penelope, with his elbow, and thus addressed her: "I say, Henny-Penny, did I ever tell you the last news about Simpsons' kitchen-maid? It's the sweep she's in love with now. I suppose she's sacked Tom Duggan, or else *he's* sacked *her*, which is the most likely. So their housemaid was telling Jim McAteer that, when the kitchen chimney's sweeping, Lizzie always sends out fourpence to him by young Mullarky for to buy himself porter, if you please. I suppose she thinks the gentleman is delicate and requires refreshments. *Of course* young Mullarky naturally keeps every penny of it for himself. But she's after getting wind of it somehow, and one night last week she was giving him all sorts in the stable-yard, where they were carting manure. I'm told he took the pitchfork to her in the end, to frighten her. I'd have given something to see them. That Lizzie's what you might call a tulip—a daisy. But, indeed, there is not a brass button to choose between one of the sweet lot up there, with

the cook at the head of them. And there's no end of queer stories about Mrs. Simpson herself. I told you about the row she had with old Anne Losty for using too much washing-soda in the lovely Miss Simpsons' calico dresses?" Penelope hearkened with a prim little smile to this anecdote, which she, of course, well knew was not recited for *her* benefit, seeing that she had indeed already heard and discussed it repeatedly. She was half proud and half alarmed at Kenneth's boldness in venturing to be so funny in the presence of company; and they both felt slightly disappointed because their guest, albeit listening with affable attention, made no particular comment, and did not ask for the hinted-at narrative about the Simpsons' washing.

A very little further acquaintance brought Hanmer to the conclusion that he would desire himself and his Moloney relatives to be better strangers, and most of them fell in with his views readily enough. On more than one occasion he had an opportunity of admiring the agility with which a large detachment of his nephews and nieces scaled some wayside fence for the obvious purpose of avoiding his approach. As for their parents, Mrs. Moloney had small leisure or energy to spare from the household affairs with which she had occupied her mind for nearly twenty years. Her own domesticities were her business, her neighbours' were her pleasure, and her talk turned evermore upon either. Dr. Moloney carried about with him a mental atmosphere so steeped in the spirit of gambling that Hanmer shunned it instinctively as if it threatened some infectious species of idiocy. The kindling of an eager interest in the performances of Take-a-spoon, Black Sheilah, or Mournful Maiden, and their jockeys, seemed to him a low fever of the mind, which might possibly come upon him in moods of depression and boredom, although normally he recognised the sordid root of all such excitement, and was not by any means tempted to the futility of imprisoning his imagination in his neighbours' pockets. As the weeks went on he settled himself into an aimless semi-content, establishing a routine of cautious reading and long rambles, the more regular because there was nothing but custom to prescribe it. His hours continued to be shapeless and empty, but when the first

retarding strangeness had worn off they seemed to move on more smoothly at least than in London. In the summer weather he found it quite possible to be not very wide awake under a sun-beaten boulder on the beach or the bog for a large tract of a spacious afternoon. More than once, indeed, his drowsiness so deepened that when roused by the voice of a swooping gull or spancellor goat, his first impulse was to address a remark, hopelessly misdirected, to George Murray. But his liability to this melancholy experience presently diminished, as he learned to dissociate the open air from the companionship of his old friend. And in the long candle-lit evenings he was relieved to observe that he could without detriment take the allowance of study to which, with an over-easily practised prudence, he had limited his eyes. He almost wished to feel more impatient of the restriction.

These more or less negative advantages were not, however, the sole or chief grounds of his tolerable contentment with Kilcashel as a residence. They were to be found in some growing plans of his, which would make it but a temporary one. As he basked on the sun-warmed rocks he arranged the details with what seemed to him considerable definiteness, his mind not being accustomed to very clear outlines in practical matters. Living at Kilcashel was decidedly cheap; half his income would apparently meet his expenditure there. His savings consequently would before long gather themselves into several hundred pounds, and when he had, say, five or six in hand he would set out on a journey southward. He would wander about until he lighted, probably by Mediterranean shores, upon some nook to his fancy, where the doing of nothing in particular would be sweetened by much sunshine, and an environment adapted to the taking of things easily, such as Kilcashel afforded only on favoured days of favoured seasons. The more he dwelt upon this scheme the more agreeable features did it present, all the pleasanter to contemplate, perhaps, because there was no question of taking any immediate steps towards a nearer view, so that the radiant skies and brilliant blossoms and picturesque, unintelligible peasants all glimmered upon his imagination through a becoming haze, which hid any troublesome preliminaries. Meanwhile he could put up with Kilcashel's deficiencies,

which were not of the sort most repugnant to him. It was common for him to be as uninterrupted on his walks as by his fireside. His road would be very lonely, even when it led past some stone-fenced flecks of farms, and the greetings of their inhabitants scarcely more disturbing than the gusts of wind or shadows of cloud that he fell in with by the way. He could reply automatically to old Matt Devlin, observing over the dyke that it was a fine day for the harvest, glory be to God, or to Peter Duff complaining from a sky-reflecting trench, "Och, your Honour, but the counthry's cruel wet, the weather's too soft on us entirely this season; whatever's took it!" But his short sight made it difficult for him to join neighbours' faces with names, even when he knew them, and the lack of the appropriate "Paddy," or "Micky," or "Mrs. Walsh" gave an awkward aloofness to his salutations which did not escape critical notices.

It betrayed him into more flagrant blunders.

"Who at all is Himself, I wonder," quoth Matt Devlin, reaping-hook in hand, to Mrs. Rourke, who had backed up against his gate for a minute's respite from the weight of her rustling sheaf.

"Sure it's he does be livin' in Daly's Cottage below," she said, as they both watched the grey tweed figure of Himself out of sight down the road in the September sunshine.

"Ay, to be sure, this good while back. But what sort of place would he be out of—furrin parts, or where?"

"Sure then, I can't tell you, man alive, except that me niece says ould Winny Corry, who keeps the house for him, tould her he brought a power of books along wid him; but she doesn't see him readin' them very assiduous, so she supposes he has them mostly all off by heart. He's a scholar, anyway."

"I don't doubt it. Well now, ma'am, what do you think he says to me just this minyit goin' by? I passed him the time of day, and says he, 'That's fine-lookin' whate you have,' says he, starin' into me bit of black oats here. 'Fine-lookin' whate,' says he. Begor, he'd know the differ fast enough if he was thryin' to put this ould hook through the wisps of it. And, '*Quare* and fine it is, sir,' says I to him; for I've somethin' else to do than to be interin' upon

explanations or argyments wid such ignorance as that. So there he is off wid himself, and thinkin' very belike he's after makin' a grand offer at it. Musha, long life to him."

"Presarve us all," said Mrs. Rourke. "What kind of sort of crops can the man ha' been used to seein' growin'?" Then, after a deliberate pause, she added explanatorily, "He's apt to be a *great* scholar."

Hanmer's literary reputation, however, did more than account for his agricultural errors; it procured him an introduction to one of his very few Kilcashel acquaintances. The newly appointed National schoolmaster, a small, fussy, kindly man, came to beg from him the loan of a few old books for a very careful and intelligent boy of the name of Bernard Conroy, who was astonishingly fond of reading, and was slowly recovering from an attack of fever. This boy arrived one day to restore the volumes, and looked so wistful when surrendering them that he could not but be invited to choose another. His selection being an *Algebra*, led to inquiries, whence it appeared that he owned what had once formed the schoolroom library at Melcrumlin House, sold by the stone-weight at the auction, when the family left, and bought for Bernard by his cousin Christy. From these he had picked up some small knowledge of foreign tongues and history; but in the elements of his favourite subject, mathematics, he had already progressed so far that Hanmer, whose studies had lain in a different direction, could not give him much help, beyond warning him off obsolete manuals, or now and then putting him in the way of acquiring some useful work. At the interviews which came of this lending and advising, they confined themselves strictly to the business in hand, and Hanmer had always found the youth scrupulously uncommunicative and unencroaching. Therefore he was the more taken aback when at length, after their acquaintance had existed for nearly a twelvemonth, Bernard put forward a request for assistance of an altogether different kind.

He had come one wet winter evening to return a book on astronomy, and having briefly discussed the immensities of it, should, in accordance with his usual custom, have said, "Good night to you, sir, and thank you kindly," but instead

remained standing silent, and twirled round his cap in his hands, as if it were a tangible screw with which he was tightening up some resolution. Hanmer wondered with a slight dismay what this might portend, and began to conjecture possible wishes, the difficult expression of which he could forestall by an offer. But before any such occurred to him, Bernard said, "You've been very good, sir, to trouble yourself about loanin' me the books this great while"—he hesitated long again, "but I'm thinkin' I'll give up the whole of it, the mathematics and all."

"Well, now, that seems a pity, unless you have some very good reason," said Hanmer.

"Mr. Derby was tellin' me there's a chance I might get an accountant's place over at Glenore," said Bernard. "Sir Ben O'Neill's lookin' out for one, and Mr. Derby was spakin' for me to their schoolmaster."

"I remember, he told me that you were anxious to get something of the sort," said Hanmer. "Still, you'd have time to keep up your reading a bit after hours, wouldn't you?" Encouraging anecdotes about the energetic make-shifts of the greatly successful occurred to him, with insufficient accuracy of detail for citation. "And on Sundays and half-holidays?"

"Oh yes, sir, I might easily enough," said Bernard.

"Then," argued Hanmer, "why need you give it up?"

"But I'm thinkin' I wouldn't take the place," said Bernard. "I'll go to the field work."

"Why on earth?" said Hanmer. "You aren't at all as fit for it, I should say." He confirmed this opinion by a more critical glance at his visitor. Bernard Conroy was a slight, spare lad, of stature somewhat low for his years, with a small, finely shaped head, on which the black hair lay soft and very straight. Under the preponderance of a high forehead, which should have been a little broader to be square, his face seemed to dwindle, thin and peaked. His brown eyes looked both weary and wistful, and his long hands moved restlessly. "Office work would suit you much better," said Hanmer, "as far as I can judge."

"I done an awful wicked thing one time," said Bernard, "that nobody knows of except two others, and they're safe

to hold their tongues, wherever they may be now—wid the divil, if they're in their right place."

"Stop—wait a minute!" said Hanmer. "Consider before you say anything more. You can't untell what you've told, you know."

"I'd liefer tell you than not if I could," said Bernard; "and I might as well be tellin' the wind and the waves of the say, for any fear I'd have, sir, of your spakin' of it again. You wouldn't be bothered wid so much as rememberin' it; and 'twould somehow rest me mind, leastwise I've the notion that it maybe would. But then the ould, hell-fire hag of a mother of his put me on me oath never to say a word, so how can I?"

"Say nothing that you're at all doubtful about," Hanmer said, ready enough to adopt this view. "Only I should advise you not to give up a prospect of suitable employment in a hurry. Of course, if you feared that this accountant's business might—might"—he hesitated—"be dangerous—a temptation—the case would be different."

"Ah, not at all," said Bernard. "Is it the money? Sure, I'd hardly take the trouble these times to be pickin' it up off the road, if it was lyin' there, belongin' to nobody under the sun. I wasn't thinkin' of that."

Hanmer bethought him of another argument. "And besides," he said, "you speak as if this—whatever it was—happened some considerable time ago, and if so, you must have been very young."

"Goin' on for eight years of age, I was," said Bernard.

Hanmer laughed with a genuine feeling of relief. "Eight?" he said. "Why, then, Conroy, the best thing you can do is not to let it occupy your mind for another eight minutes. *You*, at any rate, weren't responsible. What you say about an oath sounds black against the other people, but put it all out of your head. I'm glad you're likely to get the sort of situation you wished for. Take that *Todhunter* with you, if you like, and keep it as long as you want it."

For the moment Hanmer's laugh had sounded to Bernard like a cheerful summons out of evil dreams, and he went towards the door with a cleared countenance; but before

he touched the handle his expression changed to a look of regretful disappointment, as if at a lost opportunity, and turning round suddenly, he came back to Hanmer. "I *will* tell you, sir, oath or no," he said; "I'd made up me mind, and you'll see you may call it black. But eight year old or eighty, I'm the same person that done it, and there's no use lettin' on to think the between-time makes any differ. You might as well be tryin' to stop up a hole wid a handful of smoke. Sorra a bit of me could say I didn't rightly know what I was about, for I robbed me poor father of the pouch that he had his savings in—a power of money, no less than two hundred pound—that he'd his heart set on lavin' for me sisther and me, knowin' he wouldn't be long in this world himself. You see, sir, I was intendin' to take only two pounds of it, for some fool's notion I had of payin' me fare home to Wales, and I'd ha' put the rest back directly; but a chap that lived near us—a grown man he was—caught me wid the pouch alone on the strand and grabbed it off me, and back from him I couldn't get it, the big thievin' miscreant. Then the mother of him took and made me swear terrible curses if ever I let out a word, so I was in dread of me life and soul to be tellin' anybody, and I never did from that good day to this. And I let me poor father get his death lookin' for it, and I let him die in despair for not findin' it. That's what I done, and I'm thinkin' of it ever since, off and on. Last year, when me head got wrong in the fever, I did be tryin' to snatch it away from him, or persuade him to give it up the len'th of the night, that seemed like as if there wasn't e'er another mornin' left in the world. They said they couldn't tell what quare ravin' I had. But now I'm in me sinses, I've some-whiles the wish in me heart to be throwin' meself into the black water on the bog; only there's me sisther and all of them. And suppose the water didn't stop the thinkin'. Anyhow, that's the raison. That's why I've a feelin' against settin' meself up to be gettin' more learnin' than the others, and fine places, and livin' aisiert, as if I was their better, when God knows that if there was anythin' worse to be doin' than grubbin' in the stones and mud, it's that I'd a right to go to. So I thought I'd give it all up, and the mathematics and all."

There was clearly no evading the call to act as Chorus in this fragment of a tragedy, and Hanmer required no further prompting to utter such counsels as were obviously suggested by even his meagre knowledge of the situation. "To do that," he said, "it seems to me, would be, in a less degree, the same sort of foolishness as the unnatural folly of throwing away your life in a bog hole. The madness of that you've the sense to see for yourself. But don't you see this, that by throwing away any chances which may come to you now you'd be doing your best to justify your father's fears about your future? He cared about the money, you say, as a provision for you and your sister, so you can only carry out his wishes by providing for yourselves as well as possible."

"He'll never know one way or the other," Bernard said, continuing to stare at the floor. As Hanmer dared not contradict this assertion he sought another argument. "And as for talking of living an easier life, you won't find it so at all, if you stick to your learning. You'll have to work tremendously hard, and I believe it will be worth your while. You've plenty of brains, and will be able to earn opportunities for studying in more favourable circumstances one of these days. There are no end of possibilities in science. It has been, and still is, a field for discoveries that change the whole face of men's lives."

Bernard did not lift his downcast eyes to contemplate this spacious horizon.

"But in any case," Hanmer went on, "the worst thing you can do is to brood over the past. You met with a great misfortune, no rational being would call it anything else, and you ought to dismiss it entirely from your mind."

Bernard's gloom visibly deepened.

"Unless, indeed, there were any chance of coming down on the fellow who robbed you. That might be a good job, but after such a length of time it's hardly likely."

Bernard looked up with a gleam. "They quit the place very soon afterwards—that's a matter of ten year ago—and I've never heard a word of them since," he said; "but, bedad, if ever I happen to set eyes on him again, let him look out for himself, the hound! I'd be well able for him these times,

I would so. And I'd know him again, no fear, himself and his round head, and his big white face like a clock the devil might keep to reckon the ugly hours on in his own place, and the little cross-eyed ferret of a mother of him. Troth, if ever I behould him, 'twill be the ill day for Tim Galvin."

"Meanwhile," said Hanmer, "don't waste your time in thinking about him. Let bygones be bygones."

"So I'd maybe better, sir," Bernard said, but with a perceptible decline of enthusiasm, and thereupon he departed.

When he had gone Hanmer first reflected that the youth's evidently keener susceptibility to hopes of vengeance than to consolation from his own platitudes seemed a human and perhaps not unfavourable symptom. Then he went on to speculate where it was that he remembered himself to have seen one of those live clock faces; he thought it had been not long before he left London. But he failed to solve the problem. Finally he supposed that he would now have no more visits from the lad, which he rather regretted; but here, too, he was at fault. For not many days afterwards Bernard Conroy again appeared at Daly's Cottage, and this time had an important request to make. He seemed to have such a strong sense of its magnitude that Hanmer was surprised when it found expression in wonder whether his Honour would think entirely too bad of writing him a few lines of recommendation to Sir Ben O'Neill. Mr. Derby, the school-master, said it would be most material to him to have such an advantage, only to be sure perhaps he oughtn't to expect or ask it after what they were talking about the other night.

If Hanmer's mind had been suspicious, it might have suggested to him, plausibly and falsely, that Bernard had artfully selected a method of ensuring success for his petition, by making a refusal seem to be a consequence of his confession. But he seldom did lay snares for himself by over-shrewdness, and he now promised without demur the desired testimonial, which he subsequently drew up with no small care and pains, it being his first essay in that form of composition. When asked for Sir Ben's address, Bernard added to it: "Glenore's a grand place. The people in it

have little houses to themselves, and gardens. And there's a splendid big hall, where they do be havin' the concerts and all manner. Mr. Derby took me along wid him one time; I used to sing a bit, before me voice broke. 'Twould be great luck to be livin' in Glenore."

CHAPTER III

NOT long after this, Ulick Hanmer, rather to his surprise, found himself sojourning with his half-brother-in-law, at the Tubbermaglen Imperial Hotel. They had both been attacked by influenza, and Dr. Moloney, whose normal health was vigorously robust, naturally viewed his own case with resentful despondency. A visit with his wife to Tubbermaglen, in an adjoining county, was to have restored the convalescent, but before they could start, a child falling ill overthrew her plans. In the gloom of this fresh mischance, Dr. and Mrs. Moloney called semi-professionally at Daly's Cottage, where they found the master of the house sitting by a dull fire and listlessly attempting to flavour an insipid afternoon with *Hesiod*.

"You don't look very fit yourself, Hanmer," Dr. Moloney said, when their griefs had been told.

"Oh, I'm getting all right," Hanmer said. "Last week I seemed to be all rheumatic skeleton, and just now I feel rather like the boneless one, when he gnaws his foot in his fireless mansions; but I expect soon to regain a happy medium."

He spoke out of his uppermost thoughts, which ran on the *Works and Days*, not at all considering how strange his comparison sounded to his audience, who looked at one another perplexedly.

"You'd be all the better, too, for a little jaunt," said Dr. Moloney.

"I thought of going away somewhere for a few days," Hanmer ill-advisedly replied.

"Why not come along with me, then, to Tubbermaglen?" said Dr. Moloney. "It's a niceish place, and there's an A1 hotel. But it's slow work going solus-bolus."

Hanmer felt unmingled repugnance towards the sugges-

tion, until Dr. Moloney added apologetically : "Of course you wouldn't think of it, though ; I'd only bore you"; and his sister said, "Oh, do, Ulick ! it would be so good of you," seeming ready to be almost consoled by such flattering condescension on his part for her own disappointment in the matter. Then he became assailed by compunction, as if he had actually been manifesting some sort of ungracious arrogance, and the end of it was that he went.

Architecturally considered, Tubbernaglen is the name of three or four hotels, half a dozen boarding-houses, two churches and a shop. They occupy a nook in a wide table-land, sweeping along the sea, above which it is lifted, like the flat roof of a titanic temple, on mighty cliffs, whose huge wave-washed columns, and arches, and porticoes of limestone, curiously mimic the works of man. Its heathery bog and thorny moorlands are as lonely as the ocean they march with, and the air that blows over them to Tubbernaglen is pure and aromatic. But the place owes its reputation to the virtues of a spring which flows down in a little wooded ravine, with clear, malodorous waters, guaranteed to cure a handsome percentage of our bodily ills. This it is that has caused the growth of capacious stuccoed hotels, which it fills in the summer months, and even in wintry weather provides with a sprinkling of guests.

So the newly arrived visitors from Kilcashel, whom hopeful hunger had lured downstairs some minutes too soon for dinner, perceived that they would not be quite alone in the long coffee-room, where one elderly waiter, moving about limply like last summer's unfitly surviving fly, represented the busy swarm black-coated, who had bustled round the clattering tables in a joyless dance. He beguiled the time with a fluent tongue, which found a theme in explaining why he had just laid two places exactly opposite theirs, and another quite apart at the remotest end of the room. "These here," he said, "is a couple of very nice gentlemen, sir. They've been stopping with us for the last ten days. From Glenmore they are, in the County Mayo. Sir Ben O'Neill and Mr. Kerrigan. An uncommonly pleasant gentleman Sir Ben is, and owns a fine property at Glenore ; and the other gentleman, I understand, is his agent. Very quiet

and unassuming, and a martyr to rheumatism. Few of us escape a touch of that, sir; it is a most prevalent affliction. But we do wonders for it, sir, wonders—up here at the 'Imperial' that stands so high. The 'Queen's' and the 'Swan,' down below near the baths, are in a terrible damp situation. They're not much cared for. But away over there," he said, looking down the room, "I've made arrangements for a different party. You're perhaps not yet aware, sir, that the Millionaire arrived here about an hour before you, in a private carriage from Kellystown, where they have had him for a week. He has his mother and a Parisian maid in suite—his mother, I understand, not his lady. So it's a most unfortunate occurrence that a portion of the house, including all the private sitting-rooms, should be at the present moment undergoing redecoration, and are in the painters' hands. He was greatly put out, indeed, and the manageress is knocked about altogether. We'll have something ready early to-morrow, but it's feared he won't stop. However, he said he'd dine here to-night, and wouldn't wait till you were done your dinners, nor get his own first. I'm doing the best I can for him, and from where I've put him he'll hardly notice you. You might call it equal to private."

Tom Moloney was chuckling over his own suggestion that a screen should be set up round the Millionaire, as if he were a bad case in a hospital ward, and Ulick Hanmer was feeling rather sad, when their vis-à-vis arrived.

From the octave of first impressions struck upon the meeting of this quartette, to select Ulick Hanmer's and Ben O'Neill's: Ulick saw a tall gaunt man of advanced middle-age, with black hair much grizzled, especially where it grew in a squarely outlined whisker frill about a face rugged and furrowed, lit by deep-set grey eyes, of meditative expression. He looked ill, and his movements seemed to encounter some invisible impediment. And his companion, a man younger by perhaps twenty years, straight-featured, brown-visaged, like Chaucer's yeoman, with hazel eyes and close-cropped hair to match, stalwart, but not aggressively athletic of aspect. The martyr to rheumatism was easily identified: the owner of property at Glenore appeared to be under some concern about Mr. Kerrigan's indisposition. His pleasant

voice gave no clue to his place of abode, but the older man spoke rather gruffly, with a marked North-Irish accent. Furthermore, Hanmer became aware, in some scarcely definable way, that there was about them both the sort of uncommonness due to an impersonal attitude towards things in general, quite compatible with a most strenuous grasp of practical affairs, but not with a voluntary subjection to irrelevant trivialities. It would somehow have surprised him if either of them had put such idle queries to the waiter as did his own companion.

Ben O'Neill, on the other side, being preoccupied by recent letters, and not attracted by Dr. Moloney's rather loud jocularly, noted little more about the strangers than that the stout, florid elderly man with his rough and ready laugh, and his silent irresponsive junior, seemed an ill-assorted pair. "He looks as much down on his luck," Ben thought of the latter, "as a lad with a couple of boggy acres to feed three or four small children off." The comparison may have suggested itself to him because Hanmer was of the long-limbed, dark-haired, blue-eyed type, representatives of which are frequent in country fairs, driving the all-important "baste," with harassed face, and mien of mingled pride and melancholy.

Conversation was limited to the interchange of a few trite remarks, civilly designed to protect the silence from misconstruction. Two incidents, however, enlivened the meal. First, the entrance of the Millionaire, fat, with round white face and sleek red hair, gleaming and glooming in most correct evening costume, and with the manager himself in attendance to apologise for deficiencies. These could not be so far palliated but that they moved an ironical laugh, and the sarcasm, that this *was* certainly a slight change from *Paree*. The waiter, in the act of handing potatoes, whispered awfully, "It's Himself," and fled away to minister, with the result that the Millionaire's voice, a loud, drawling whine, was presently raised again in denunciation of the soup, which it condemned as "the most discreditable mess a gentleman was ever expected to put a spoon in." Then, just as he had let the handle of *his* spoon drop with a contumelious clatter, there was a scurrying rustle at the

door, and in swept a swirl of lilac silk draperies. They were trailed along hurriedly by a short, oldish woman, whose faded sandy locks, all tumbled in disorder, looked as if her otherwise elaborate toilet had stopped short ere the important stage of head-dressing. There was a hard flush on her face, and a hard glitter in her eyes. Close in her wake followed a trim, muslin-lappeted maid, carrying a fur-lined cloak. Half-way down the long room her mistress wheeled round abruptly to confront this attendant, who narrowly escaped tripping over the coiling train. "You're follyin' me again," the old woman said loudly. "What for, I should like to know? I suppose I'm to have a bit of dinner."

The maid with much adroitness evaded the entangling folds, and replied, "It is but that I bring the mantle of Madame, which she may require." Then, glancing disdainfully round her, she added, "This is a poor, cold place to dine in. Were I Madame, I would take a cup of tea in my own apartment. It would be far more *comme il faut*. A strong cup of nice tea, with just a——"; she whispered the rest of the suggestion into the ear of Madame, who hesitated irresolutely. "The last time you promised," she said, "there wasn't e'er a drop in it that I could get the taste of."

"It will be a different affair now," the maid said, "Madame may be persuaded"; and Madame apparently was, for she turned towards the door. The Millionaire, who had jumped up in a flustered way at her entrance, and stood as if waiting for the result of the colloquy, subsided into his chair again, and the maid nodded to him reassuringly as she followed her mistress. As the door closed on them, Dr. Moloney tapped his forehead significantly, for the instruction of his lay neighbours; and then, fancying himself observed by the Millionaire, coughed, and awkwardly made as if he had been brushing back his hair. Dinner ended without any further incidents.

But next morning he was called upon to give more formally a professional opinion. The waiter brought word that the Millionaire, hearing how a medical man was staying in the house, wished to consult him. "It's only about the mother, I fancy, sir; if it was himself he'd hardly ask you to be responsible, but 'ud wire to Kelleystown," the waiter

said encouragingly. "But if it was our season now, indeed he'd have been at no loss for medical advice. There's mostly several highly qualified medical practitioners in residence with us then at Tubbernaglen. I'd undertake to have a couple of them at a visitor's bedside within five minutes, at any hour of the day or night, or double as many, for the matter of that."

"Two brace of us!" said Dr. Moloney. "Oh, the Lord help him! It's the seven angels he'd want for to be sending after next," and he repaired to his patient in a jovial mood.

The Millionaire's mother was indeed the invalid, and a glance at her, as she sat with fidgeting hands and fixed eyes staring at a dusty sunbeam, confirmed him in his diagnosis of last night. Her mental state, in fact, seemed to him so obvious that he missed the point of her son's insistent dwelling upon how much worse she had just now been, and how temporary was her present improvement, and how ready he himself to grudge *no expense*, should any little difficulty occur in getting her admitted into a first-class establishment, which he had heard most highly spoken of near a place called Bresk. Dr. Moloney really saw no reason to apprehend any difficulties, and said so with a frankness which the Millionaire received knowingly, as he likewise did the doctor's offer to arrange about the procuring of the requisite certificate. Pending this, a sedative was to be administered, and here again the Millionaire looked on appreciatively at the suppression of French Marthe, who saw fit to assert a belief that Madame would be in the best of good health on the next day. It was but that she had been somewhat overthrown by an incident of their yesterday's walk. Going down a little alley, suddenly they found themselves on the seashore, among sands and rough rocks. And Monsieur was well aware that the vicinity of the sea had always upon Madame an effect disquieting, exciting. Here Madame, drumming angrily on the arms of her chair, said aloud, "If that hussy with her white streamers had let me search through them boulder-stones rightly, I might likely enough ha' got it. Somewheres among them he had it, I know. But keepin' it from me he'll be till me soul's lost over it. That's what he's up to, the divil take him!" Her words,

however, fell unheeded, for Dr. Moloney was simultaneously saying to Marthe, "My good woman, you're not at all called upon to be giving an opinion about your mistress's health. What you've got to do is to obey orders, and not talk about things you don't understand. I don't want your views of the case." Then, as the two women subsided into mutterings, he sat down and wrote a prescription. The Millionaire also promptly filled up a cheque for an amount the magnitude of which quite amazed the doctor. It was signed "Timothy Vittie," and on this occasion Mr. Vittie may be considered to have made a bad bargain, not getting such good value for his money as he supposed. Still, his misconception caused him to feel complacently towards Dr. Moloney, and they discoursed with an affability on his part which would have seemed highly improbable on the previous evening, when he was haughtily demanding of the awed manageress whether she had the impudence to think it likely that it would suit him to take his dinner in the company of a dispensary pill-pounder.

Meanwhile Ulick Hanmer had been making acquaintance with Ben O'Neill. The overtures had naturally come from the latter. To Hanmer, lounging aimlessly after breakfast, this stranger had approached, and using the testimonial to Bernard Conroy as a letter of introduction, had started a series of remarks explanatory and interrogative, all of which presupposed on the other's part a non-existent familiarity with the affairs of Kilcashel and Glenore. Hanmer did not by any means realise the unusual depth of his ignorance upon such matters, and it was not until something in O'Neill's tone suddenly suggested to him that his inability to give any particulars about the circumstances of his protégé might tend to discount the value of his recommendation, that he pulled his inert faculties together and endeavoured to extract some definite facts from his misty memories. Then he did recollect that the schoolmaster had said Conroy's people lived at a fishing-place called Port Maguire. And, now that he thought of it, the boy had told him one wet evening how he had got the loan of a lift half-way, which left him only three miles to walk. So Port Maguire must be six miles from Kilcashel. As this deduction, which he an-

nounced with an air of ostentatious sagacity, seemed to exhaust his stores of such information, he supplemented them by enlarging upon the intelligence and industry of young Conroy, in whom he really felt some interest. Said Ben O'Neill thereupon, "It sounds as if he might suit us right well. My friend Kerrigan has kept our accounts hitherto, but they increase and multiply with our business, so he wants an assistant who later on perhaps could take all that part of the work off his hands."

"Conroy seems very keen about it," said Hanmer, "and evidently considers Glenore a terrestrial paradise."

"I can imagine it making some such impression upon a resident at Port Maguire," said Ben O'Neill. "That's an awful place, isn't it? Last time I was there, we'd just had a spell of rough weather, and really there seemed to be as much wet seaweed as thatch on the roofs. Did you ever see worse land?"

By another effort of memory Hanmer succeeded in associating the name of Port Maguire with a particular point on a sea-skirting road, where a forlorn little creature, crippled in mind and body, had occasionally waylaid him, praying for pennies, a woeful haunting which had sometimes turned the balance when he was undecided about the direction of a walk. But as nothing more to the purpose was forthcoming, he replied evasively, "Would you call it worse than that?"

They were sitting on the low stone wall which bounded the "Imperial" grounds, and "that" was a patch over the way, whose claims to be considered arable land would have escaped notice only for the presence in it of a man digging, attended by a woman and children gathering up a plentiful stony crop. "I think so," said Ben O'Neill; "there seems to be rather more earth here. We had holdings every bit as bad, though, at Glenore in the old times. But we've got rid of them all now."

"Ah, evicted them, I suppose?" Hanmer said glibly, just as he might have conjectured about the weather or any other commonplace of conversation. He was looking across the road at the workers, with, it must be admitted, very little intelligent interest. His notions about the "husbandman"

were mainly derived from ancient classical literature slightly modified by an impression that modern improvements must no doubt have made the methods described by Theocritus or Virgil somewhat less clumsily tedious; and it never occurred to him to consider at all what chain of circumstances might have brought this present one setting potatoes in the unkindly soil of Tubbernaglen, nor whither, failing that resource, their tethering-rope would allow him to betake himself. So he sat swinging his long legs, entirely unaware of the impression made by his remark. His companion surveyed him for a moment disgustedly, and during that space of time there was much probability of their discourse ending thus for good. But suddenly Ben O'Neill was struck by something absurd in the complete unconsciousness of the other's air under his own disapproving glances, and it made him leave off glowering to reply with a good-humoured laugh at themselves, "Oh, I say, you know, you might as well suppose to a respectable M.F.H. that he had been killing all his foxes. No, we evicted none of them, unless you call it eviction to offer a man the nearest bit of decent land available, in addition to the hopeless screed he was on. That, as a rule, did speedily lead to spontaneous eviction. There were of course one or two cases where objections rose on the grounds that they'd never heard talk of any such a thing in their poor father's time. But, after all, we'd very little difficulty of that kind."

"Oh, then you're a reforming landlord?" said Hanmer, slightly taken aback in his turn. For he said to himself, "People of that sort talk by the yard—about live stock and cottage gardening, and village schools." He had that intolerant dread of unusual demands upon his time and attention which is so often noticeable in an absent-minded and unpractical person, whose acquaintances are disposed to wonder what on earth he does with himself from morning till night. Accordingly, the prospect of being required to hear such talk he now viewed with disfavour, mitigated, indeed, by the reflection that the facetiousness of Tom Moloney, to whom this week was devoted, might be the only alternative.

"I suppose that's what we are," said O'Neill. "To tell

you the truth, I'm so inflated with self-importance that I should have thought the fame of our proceedings would have reached you in Kilcashel. Some people there abuse us a good deal, I know."

"I don't hear most things, somehow," Hanmer said, with an expression which bespoke no regret at the fact; then, perhaps because he was conscious of this, he added, "And Glenore's a good step from Kilcashel, isn't it?"

"Oh, well, not very far, as bicycles go," said Ben O'Neill, "and that's how I generally get about. It's how I got there originally, indeed—came a cropper, head foremost, down the steepest hill; an injudicious way of alighting off a sixty-inch ordinary, even if you're prepared, as I wasn't, to make a considerable stay."

"Or start again immediately," said Hanmer.

"Of course that's a possible result too. However, nothing more serious befell me than to be tied by the leg there for a month or so, and that's how I made my friend Kerrigan's acquaintance, which has been a fortunate thing—in some ways."

"It's not very easy, I suppose, to find an agent who falls in with your views," said Hanmer.

"Neither of us is an agent exactly," said Ben O'Neill, "though I act as one to some extent. Kerrigan's the landlord."

"Oh, indeed," said Hanmer. "Not a very typical specimen of one, is he? assuming that there is a type."

"I'm not sure, but he certainly doesn't conform to it. He's had a queer life: belonged to some small farming people in the North, and roughed it unsuccessfully in Australia till he was forty, when an uncle out there suddenly died and left him a very large fortune, so that he came home a rich man."

"It's hard to realise such a shock of good luck," said Hanmer.

"You'd scarcely have called it so, if you'd seen him as I did soon after the event. I fancy his home-coming had been a failure, somehow, and a disappointment. Such things may be the abomination of desolation. At any rate he had settled himself in a small farmhouse at Glenore, and was

living there most forlornly, quite alone, and seemingly without interests of any kind. Not at all from incapacity—he's really a very able man—but just from want of energy and an object in life."

"Then I suppose you stirred him up," said Hanmer, not without some fellow-feeling for the invaded solitary of Glenore, "and got him to join you in carrying out your views?"

"No, not I. The plans were his own, and it was someone else who first put the notion into his head," said Ben O'Neill.

"My goodness!" Hanmer said to himself a little aghast, "I hope he's not going to claim divine inspiration for their schemes. He really spoke quite devoutly. Still, he seems to be a sensible sort of fellow." But aloud he only remarked, "Managing a model village must be a great piece of work, and keep you pretty busy."

"Oh, Glenore's not a model village by any manner of means," said Bep O'Neill, "though no doubt it's a very different-looking place from what it was a dozen years ago. And I'm not at all overwhelmed with business; in fact, I'd sometimes be glad of more to do. However, one can mostly make out something. There's lots of shooting and fishing and all that sort of thing at Glenore, if you want a bit of sport. I take a day with the hounds now and again. And then one has time for civilised pursuits in the evenings, or rather I should have, if I didn't get so abominably sleepy. I'm ashamed sometimes to go off to bed like an overgrown schoolboy, leaving Kerrigan at his books and papers."

Thinking of his own often sleepless nights and listless days, Hanmer was tempted to say, "I declare you've been a lucky fellow."

Such an assertion probably seldom escapes without challenge, silent at least, on the part of the person congratulated; and undoubtedly there were incidents in the past life of Ben O'Neill which he might reasonably have entered in protest against it. Memories, for instance, of some stormy April days years ago spent on the shore of a sea that had beaten down his hope with its wildest waves, and that never since, in its softest shining, had been a sight he loved to look upon; or, further back, of a closely

shuttered room in a Dublin club-house, where he had stood at a window-chink reading a half-written letter which he had ever since been hungering to answer. Nevertheless he replied with sincerity, "Well, I believe I have. The main point is to have plenty of occupation that you can interest yourself in, and my work's a good sort for that. Some results of it are continually growing before your eyes in an obvious way that is immediately satisfactory to the unphilosophic mind; but there are no end of further possibilities in it. Yes, certainly, it's a bigger chance than I should ever have got by my own wits. And there was luck, too, in Kerrigan and myself just coming across one another that way, for he and I have always agreed capitally, though he's not a man who gets on easily with everybody, and it would have been an awful pity if he had stayed stuck in his hole. I believe he'll make a great thing of this land business. He's been studying all manner of useful subjects while he was laid up, and has got a thorough grip of them to an extent that would be quite beyond me. Evidently he would have been quite thrown away upon the work of mere detail and routine that is my part of it chiefly; but it suits me very well, and I like it too."

Hanmer apprehended that the continuance of this topic might lead to more details than would suit him, so with a view to starting another, he observed, "Your friend doesn't look very strong."

"No," said Ben O'Neill; "he's been more or less invalided ever since an attack of rheumatic fever he had soon after I met him first. However, his health improves steadily, and I hope he'll be a strong man again yet. This last unlucky cold he caught at our council meeting—a horrible day. Go he would, because at this time of year he's always anxious about our Common Lot."

"Ah yes," said Hanmer. The seasons, he said to himself, might, for anything he knew, be likely to have that effect upon the philanthropic mind. Again Ben O'Neill looked at him with some dissatisfaction, which again ended in a laugh. But this time, their acquaintance having made some progress, he gave utterance to his disapproval. "It's rather disgusting of you to 'let on' that way—you *couldn't* have

understood. I really don't talk such idiocy as all that. It's an absurd name Kerrigan and I have for the part of the estate we all farm conjointly; the others call it the Big Lands. You see, each tenant has a bit of ground about his house, more or less of it, according to the number there are at home to look after it; and the rest of the land—it's mainly a good-sized block lying round the lough—they work on co-operatively. Then at the end of the year we divide the profits. Everybody has a fixed share, because everybody pays part of the rent, but over and above that, each tenant's share is proportionate to the quantity of labour and so forth he has contributed. And the rent goes back into the land. We find the plan a success, and the intetest in the Big Lands goes on increasing. Kerrigan's notion is that eventually they'll prefer to farm all the land in co-operation, except just the little bits of fruit and flower gardens, but that seems to me rather doubtful, and I'm not going to talk any more shop. I want to pass the time of day with the people over there, and ask about a few things."

"I wish I had some shop of my own," said Hanmer. "Luck, or whatever it is, has done me out of any. Not that my special work was much of a thing—just a small, bookwormy fad. It involved an amount of peering and poking that put a great strain on the eyes, and mine threatened to strike. I suppose I should have looked out for something else, only that it was a case of what they call 'small independent means,' which is fatal to a lazy man in such circumstances."

"Why, yes, if you throw buns into the pit, the bear won't climb the pole," said Ben O'Neill. "A beastly bad analogy, though, for the bear's no better off, and more ridiculous, squatting open-mouthed on top."

"I'm not sure of that," said Hanmer. "Perhaps he gets a wider view of his surroundings, and a nearer view of humanity, along with the buns, to the enlargement of his mind."

But notwithstanding this sentiment, the enunciation of which made him feel that he had said what he ought to have said rather neatly, Hanmer, as he watched the reforming landlord getting over the opposite wall, was not disposed to

covet such a lot for himself. His own fairly well-fenced leisure, with a prospect of more varied scenes to frame it by-and-by, still seemed to him on the whole a preferable possession, and a gritty-feeling north-east wind, which at this moment blustered up round him, made him reflect with satisfaction upon the probability that he need not see many more Irish springs. The blast carried to him the sound of a voice. It proceeded across the narrow road from a very small ragged child, who had scrambled up on the dyke, and was reciting in a finch-like chirp a shrill little litany: "Gimme a few pinnies, plase sir, gimme a few pinnies."

"Young person," Hanmer began, "you oughtn't to be squeaking for pennies." Nevertheless his hand was going towards his pocket, when a somewhat larger, but still petticoated child, who had been galloping along unseen on the field side of the dyke, pulled the beggar down by the skirts from behind, so that they both fell backward, scuffling among a clatter of loose stones, and amid belligerent yells, which had not ceased when the visitor walked away.

On going indoors, not long afterwards, Hanmer arrived at the end of a scene less noisy, but not more amicable, and seemingly corroborative of O'Neill's remark about his friend's incapacity for getting on with everybody. Martin Kerrigan, undoubtedly, was not in the best of humours on that morning. In the most favourable circumstances hotel life was hateful to him, and, just now, the discomforts of a sleepless night, prolonging themselves in aches and pains, disposed him to look with little tolerance upon all its odious incidents. One of these was the necessity of writing his letters among the chilly draughts of the reading-room, where the ponderous brass ink-bottle contained only a sediment thick and slab, which the waiter appeared to him unreasonably slow in replacing with something less solid. He scribbled pencil-notes impatiently as he waited, reflecting that, at any rate, he had the infernal hole to himself, when it was deprived of this extenuating circumstance by the entrance of the Millionaire. Kerrigan had been very unfavourably impressed by Mr. Vittie overnight; in fact, he had remarked after dinner, "That's a man I wouldn't trust the length of my nose—the fat, whining fellow. I remember a chap very like

him we had along with us one time sheep-shearing, up at my uncle's place. One morning he wouldn't come to work, and stopped behind us all in the shed. Said his foot was bad ; so we left him reading his big Bible. When we came in, off he was, bad foot and all, and any bits of savings of ours that he could find. But the big Bible was there, right enough, Sir Ben." Said Sir Ben, "Oh, this man's probably nothing worse than the ordinary cad, who's grown rather too big for his boots. The thing's never attractive." But Kerrigan remained of his own opinion.

Accordingly, he viewed Mr. Vittie's approach to the table with no friendly eye, although anticipating nothing more than an intention to write at it. Mr. Vittie, however, spoke ; and what he said was, "Look here, Mr. What's-your-name, I must trouble you to send that impudent chap of your employer's about his business at once. I've been looking for the Baronet, but I daresay he leaves the servants to you. The insolent brute !"

"What's wrong?" said Kerrigan, without looking off his paper. As Mr. Vittie's experience had for some time past been teaching him that he might very reasonably expect such an announcement to be received with horror, amazed and apologetic, he was disconcerted by this rejoinder scarcely less than if the ink-bottle had flown at his head. "What's wrong, did you say? Why, just this, that he's after using language in the yard, to *my valley*," said Mr. Vittie, "that I wouldn't care to repeat."

"There's no occasion," Kerrigan said, continuing to write.

"Very well," said Mr. Vittie, "very well ; I'll complain to the manager. *He* won't be long kicking out people who don't know how to behave themselves, and their hangers on. *He* knows that sort of business would come rather too expensive."

Kerrigan, well pleased, saw him depart to seek redress. But during the past twelve hours millionaires, upon a nearer view, had been falling in the manager's esteem, as far, at least, as this representative of the class was concerned. A haggling wrangle about carriage hire, and an obvious desire to give as much trouble at as little cost as possible, had

already made it clear that dreams of reaping an abnormally golden harvest from the Vitties' brief stay need be cherished no longer, and the manager therefore felt nowise called upon to affront for their sakes the sojourners of a fortnight, whose return was recurrent, and whose habits set few bells whirring. So Mr. Vittie presently flounced back into the reading-room without satisfaction to announce that he would now write to the Hotel Company, and give a piece of his mind upon the earliest opportunity to Benjamin O'Neill. *Baronets* might be very fine-titled people, but he had met specimens of them himself that he would think a long time about calling *gentlemen*. Perhaps because this second interruption had occurred at an especially rheumatic moment, Kerrigan's tone was by no means conciliatory as he uttered a hope that the other would think any length of time he liked, and not hurry himself then about reporting his opinion. Several rejoinders and sur-rejoinders of a like tendency had passed, and Mr. Vittie in retreating was discharging his last shaft through the door, as Ulick Hanmer came along the passage. His association with the accommodating doctor recommended him to the enraged Millionaire as a probable sympathiser, and he relieved his feelings by remarking loudly, "There's an uncommonly nice style of people stopping in this hotel, sir; I daresay you may have noticed. Most superior and toploftical; quite a treat to meet, aren't they? Though perhaps they're not exactly the class one's accustomed to. However, I shan't pig it here a minute longer than I'm obliged, and I expect my people have had the gumption to be keeping a sharp look-out on my traps."

Hanmer, who was thinking, as frequently happened, about matters not even remotely connected with what lay immediately before him, did not, when thus accosted, rouse himself from his abstraction sufficiently to have more than a vague sense that an unpleasant sort of fool seemed anxious to enter into discourse with him, a desire which he would by no means further. So he replied merely, "Ah, indeed!" and slipped rapidly past, with distaste written on his countenance much more legibly than he knew.

Now the gruff rudeness of Kerrigan had hotly angered Mr. Vittie, and was a thing to be retributively remembered,

should occasion offer. But somehow it had not kindled in him at all such a resentful heat as did Hanmer's merely indifferent brushing by. He felt rancorously that he would go out of his way for a chance of avenging this ; in fact, Hanmer had made an enemy unawares.

However, no opportunities for hostile demonstrations presented themselves before the following noon, when the "Imperial" hall was filled with the bustle of the Millionaire's departure. Its superintendent was Mr. Vittie's valet, laden with a voluminous furry coat and two huge dressing-bags, most massive of construction, and solidly silver of fittings, able to disgorge a miscellany of implements calculated to make one's toilet seem very intricately impossible—splendid specimens of luggage in every sense, Caliban's included. But Mr. Lawson handed them over with little regard to a subordinate, who stood beside a waiting carriage. "Here, bundle 'em in somewheres," he said ; "the blarsted wyght of 'em's enough to pull yer harms out of the sockets. If we ain't orf soon, we'll miss the bloomin' train at Clonmartin Junction. But the old woman warn't ready. She's givin' trouble this mornin', I farncy."

Meanwhile Mr. Vittie himself was in the office bestowing blame at departing upon the manager in terms the conclusion of which alone penetrated into the hall : "However, you've got the amount of your swindling bill, which is all that concerns you. And I've ordered my man not to give a penny to any hanger-on about the dirty place."

The Millionaire made his exit with a dignity not unworthy of this sublime peroration. But there seemed to be a sort of suppressed flurry and struggling before the carriage was finally loaded and driven away.

CHAPTER IV

FROM silver-backed hair-brushes and cut-glass scent-bottles it is a far cry to mud-and-straw beds and pig-shared dwellings; but we must now briefly revert to these, taking up the career of Timothy Galvin in the last days of his early obscurity, when he was, that is to say, at the point of departure from Port Maguire. At the cost of much argument and a couple of his pounds, he dissuaded his mother, whom he had misinformed as to the real magnitude of his booty, from accompanying him at present. She might or might not be useful to him, he reflected in his awakening mind; but if she came along with him now, he would find it hard to get rid of her in any case, and then it would be a pity to throw away the old man's pension. So he saw her safely quartered, still within reach of it, though from an opposite point of the compass. He himself repaired northward in quest of a cousin, who was known to be living near Lisburn, and doing business in the very smallest way as a provision dealer. By producing a trivial fraction of his fortune, Timothy easily obtained acceptance as a partner in the firm of Thomas Vittie, wife, and family of six. Their stock-in-trade at that time consisted of three stale loaves, two packets of dips, "just a scrapin' of soft sugar," and "just a dustin' of tay" at the bottom of their respective canisters, and half a side of rusty American bacon, which Timothy promptly labelled as *Best Limerick, 8d.* These pitiful wares seemed a wizened kernel in too wide a shell of roomy but dilapidated premises, in which he at once descried possibilities. A sparing outlay of capital enabled him to make them all glorious with pink and yellow wash and strips of gaudy paper; then he procured licence and liquor, and began to thrive. Also he began to make wary little speculative investments, all secrets of his own, and

with these likewise he had good luck—amazingly good in some cases. He considered himself further fortunate when, before many months had passed, his cousin Tom Vittie died; for the event simplified that sharing of profits which had ever appeared to him a vain and vexatious part of the proceedings. In after days he sometimes shuddered inwardly at the thought of how near he had then come to making up a match with the widow; but even at this early stage of his career he had entertained a saving conviction that he might do better. Accordingly he had quarrelled with her instead, and got rid of her and her interest in the lease and business—she was a silly, ignorant, tearful sort of woman—on quite easy terms. As he stood to watch the flitting of the many Vitties with their few household effects, mainly in a donkey-cart, he felt that they were a very good riddance. The Widow Vittie was of course crying, and three-year-old Biddy, a soft-hearted, fat child, prone to unrequited attachments, had set up rueful howls upon hearing that Misther Galvin would not accompany them to their new home. “It’s a grand job to be shut of the pack of them,” he mused, turning back into the house—*his* house. “But I’ll keep the name up there yet”—he glanced at the “T. Vittie” over the door; “it might be more convanient on all chances.”

The particular chance he had in his mind was the possible arising of trouble in connection with the method by which he had acquired his capital last autumn on Port Maguire strand. Though this was now, he hoped, a remote contingency, the apprehension of it long continued to haunt him from time to time; and when next year he moved on to a larger establishment in a more important town, it induced him to take his trading-name with him for use not only above his broad plate-glass front, but in all the other relations of life. To change one’s name for a property always seems a more than respectable proceeding. His style and title was henceforth to be Mr. Timothy Vittie. By-and-by, indeed, he began to be offended at envelopes that did not bear an Esquire.

Before that period, however, and while he was still on the scene of his earliest commercial enterprises, a somewhat untoward event befell him. This was the reappearance to

him of his mother, whom he had hopefully believed to be quartered at a very safe distance, and securely tethered there by the wish to remain within reach of her pension. He had commended this arrangement to her by promises of remittances, which he had purposely failed to send, in the trust that the misleading itinerary, which he had been careful to give her, would prevent her from ever finding her way, unguided by even so much as a postmark clue. Could he have felt certain that a dole of shillings would keep her off, she would have received them punctually, but for anything he could tell, they might only serve as a lure. Herein he underrated his mother's capabilities. For, perceiving clearly that the pension game was nearly played out, and feeling intensely curious about what Timothy might be doing "with all that hantle of money, and herself as good as starving," she had started on the track of him and his pouch with a persevering ingenuity which in the end success did crown.

It had been a wet Saturday night when she arrived at the shop, and Timothy, while he blew open a thin paper bag for the reception of the Miss O'Farrells' so-called pound of so-called butter, was entertaining them with gallant pleasantries of the most superior quality as a sort of make-weight, when he became aware of a small, bedraggled beggar-woman, bareheaded, with loops of sandy hair, who, sidling inwards from the doorway, fixed upon him an anxious gaze of sharp-cornered, china-blue eyes. He waved her peremptorily into the back room, and there an interview presently followed. It began with much acrimony, exasperated by the fact that he found her half-way through the savoury plateful of sausage remnants which he had left keeping hot for his own supper. As she fearfully nibbled at her son's food, she had felt all the while that she might thereby be forfeiting her chances of conciliating him; yet her ravenous hunger had not permitted her to desist. So it was with a huge and almost unhopd-for relief that she found herself finally being allowed to stay, temporarily at least. The grandeur of the premises also took her by surprise; she had not expected anything at all so magnificent. As she gleefully repaired to the attic assigned for her bed-chamber, she looked in, on her way, at Timothy's room, and was mightily impressed by the

luxury of its appointments. "The laws bless us," she said, "and will you sleep between two sheets, like the Quality?" But on the morrow she was actually bidden to appropriate a share of this splendour. For Timothy flung her instructions to take an outfit from an odd lot of damaged drapery goods, which had been long on hand, and to not let him see her going about that scandalous figure of a scarecrow again. She chose a shawl of colossal terra-cotta and peacock-blue plaid, and a strong violet skirt, and a black bonnet with wild salmon-pink trimmings, in which array she immediately attended public worship once more with intense pleasure and pride. A neighbour of caustic tongue commented upon her setting forth: "Musha, sure there's maybe plinty of fine things at the bottoms of the mud puddles, if they got the chance to creep out"; implying, apparently, that this mysterious new-comer *had* got her chance. Timothy really thought that her appearance left little to be desired, though he would on no account have set her up by telling her so.

When the first shock of alarm and annoyance had passed off, he began to feel that, after all, he might find her useful. During the greater part of his existence he had been accustomed to rely upon her acuteness and activity, while yet the absence of any accessible opening had made it seem to him that the best bargain he could drive with his destiny was for a life of penurious sloth. Now that these glorious chances had roused his dormant energy, there was no reason apparent, in this day of small things, why she should not be able to assist him in turning them to account. At any rate it would be worth while to try, especially as she knew too much about his affairs to be sent safely or cheaply about her business. His mother herself did her utmost to confirm him in this opinion, working with an indefatigable zeal, which her natural talent for huxtering made so judicious and fruitful that she wove herself into the fabric of the establishment with threads daily less possible to sever or disentangle. "Old Mrs. Vittie" became a power both behind the counter and beside the hearth, firmly seated, unless, indeed, a young Mrs. Vittie should arrive to shake her off. "I'm right enough," she said to herself, appreciating the situation, "so long as he doesn't take it into

his head to get married on me. The wife 'ud be apt to have me put out. But he might maybe do better wid me in the shop, all the same, let me tell her. At any rate, it's queer if I haven't a bit saved up out of him, before there's e'er a sign of the hussy comin'."

Timothy, in truth, seemed to have no thoughts of matrimony, being fully occupied with the flourishing of his affairs. Whatsoever he did prospered highly and swiftly. He had scarcely grown accustomed to the dignity of his appearance in coarse print on the top of his little flimsy bills as *Timothy Vittie, Family Grocer, Provision Dealer, and General Draper, Licensed to sell Spirits, Main Street, Rathcrone*, when the increase of his business moved him on into more spacious premises, and a position in which he ceased to appear behind his counter, and condescended to interview only the very most important of his customers, if they called to complain about the quality of his butter or bacon. Then he began to throw out branches, and to employ managers, and to own a fleet of drays and vans, being enabled to do so by the remarkably good luck which attended his speculations. Slumps and gluts and corners and booms, with all the other euphonious vocabulary of commercial enterprise, had worked together for his benefit, until they produced him a fortune of a bulk that might have been trusted to go on accumulating by virtue sheerly of its magnitude, drawing to itself increase as a mountain draws the clouds and mists. Not that Timothy now ever thought of adopting such a supine course. Far from it, he continued with unabated industry his financial operations—they now merited a phrase so fine—and before long found it expedient to transfer the scene of his labours to London.

All these things had happened well within half a score years of that other financial operation—it maybe merits a yet finer phrase—which he had achieved on Port Maguire beach; but he had travelled so far since then in everything except time, that the incident seemed to him immeasurably remote, and his mind was so constantly occupied with the business of building up the fortune he had there founded, that he seldom looked back upon the occurrence. When he did so, it was with a strengthening conviction that he had

mounted far above the reach of any trouble arising because of bygone ways and means; the end accomplished was magnificent enough to guarantee him against all such dangers. The tree he had planted had attained to so goodly a growth that its admirers would think it doubtless an insignificant matter, even if they learned how the seedling had been watered by the tears of a despairing child. Perhaps Mr. Vittie did not use just this simile; but his sentiment was much the same when he said to himself that the whimpering brat was safe enough, and the devil's cure to it. Nevertheless, he reverted with more pleasure to memories of those earlier filched halfpence and sweets, of days when he had been joyous and, while not found out, free from blame. The aroma of his strongly flavoured black-and-white-striped sugarsticks, consumed lingeringly under the ditch's hollowed bank, with the bunchy old elderbush overhead, and a chickweedy trickle of water at his feet, came back to him sometimes incongruously enough, midway in a many-coursed London dinner, perhaps, or when he was conversing elegantly with some person of the highest Quality; and always it seemed to him somehow an omen of good luck.

This triumphant progress was shared up to a certain point by Timothy's mother. It was not in the nature of things that her part should be equal to his. Her position was essentially subordinate and precarious; she had no longer the advantages of youth. Notwithstanding, she did, as we have seen, associate herself very intimately with his undertakings, and though her assistance was not indispensable, her contribution to their success could not be overlooked. She planned and toiled, and was as busy from morning till night as a bee turned single-handed, so to speak, into a myriad-blossomed garden. To a bee resident till past middle-age among meagrely weeded places, this would seem somewhat exciting and bewildering; and Mrs. Vittie was at times both bewildered and excited by the lucrateness of her surroundings. "By the laws," she said one day to her son, "there's money these times in everything one touches, as sure as there's meal on one's wet finger, when one's after tryin' a full bag wid it." This

comparison being suggested by Mrs. Vittie's method of ascertaining the doubtful contents of various receptacles in the shop. But the call for active exertion, so long as it lasted, prevented her from over-indulgence in vain-glorious gloating and brooding. It was not until Timothy's business outgrew the need for personal superintendence on her part that she began to lag behind, and feel seriously conscious of incapacity. When at length it became unnecessary and unseemly for her any more to be seen in the bustling shop, the days of her banishment thence waxed long and heavy. She was not young enough to discard her old habits easily, still less to devise new pleasures, which demands some freshness of the fancy and imagination. Her plight resembled, in this respect, that of the navvy, who, having wished for as much beef and beer as ever he could eat and drink, could conjure up nothing further to desire except "a little more beer." Mrs. Vittie's additional beer generally consisted of yet another inspection of her new bonnet and shawl, and household gear, although similar inspections had already been so frequent as to have become a stale and insipid pastime, except when spiced with the special condiment of an admiring neighbour's presence. But that she rarely enjoyed; for her social instincts, never strong, had shrivelled away utterly during the bitter penury of her Port Maguire days; and she made acquaintances with difficulty. The recognition of her inability to keep up with the pace of his progress was deferred for Timothy by his custom of regarding her as an authority upon all nice points of etiquette and deportment, owing to her former experiences of high life in service with the gentry. Hints upon these matters became very essential for him when he began to move in polished circles, among city magnates, where manners were fine. Not until he had met with more than one mortifying rebuff in consequence of acting upon her instructions, drawn chiefly from notes made at times when "she would be squinting through the parlour door in the back hall at a dinner-party, and waiting for the plates to come out," did Timothy perceive how impossible it was to place any confidence in her as a guide. The discovery materially diminished her prestige and influence; yet he did not see nor feel his way to a complete break with her. His

plan was rather to let her gradually drop behind at the end of a lengthening cable, while he forged ahead on his more adventurous course.

Their move to London gave an opportunity for stretching the cable. Arrived there, he left her permanently in the South-East lodgings which he had taken at first, and himself migrated West-End-ward. He told her it was to a rougher sort of place, where he would be nearer his business. Mrs. Vittie was not at all dissatisfied with this arrangement. Her apartments at 6, Blatchford Crescent, transcended her brightest dreams of accommodation. They were furnished in a style which suggested that the débris of wrecked railway dining saloons had been utilised for the purpose, and the result impressed her profoundly. One contorted gilt table with an imitation marble top she contemplated often, long and reverently, as if it were an altar. Then she gloried in the number of the chairs. She could count as many as ten of various patterns in the parlour alone, and she made a point of sitting once on each of them in the course of a morning. But in those days she found it hard, indeed, to sit long quiet anywhere. She was still as full of energy as ever, in both mind and body, only less supple and flexible. Hence, finding herself with unlimited leisure on her labour-roughened hands, into which what appeared to her ample funds were given without much grumbling by Timothy, who, as his ideas enlarged, sometimes secretly wondered that she could be so cheaply kept satisfied, she was often perplexed and irritated by an uneasy sense of failure to make the most of her opportunities. She felt much as she had done long years ago at Kilderry, when a brewery cart had broken down outside her door, and an insecurely fastened barrel had been left on the opposite bank unminded for an hour, while she owned but one sizable jug, and it leaking, wherewith to appropriate the chance. All her standards seemed to be shifted and confused; she alternated between fits of economy and extravagance, one day hiding away shillings in queer corners, and the next, sallying forth to shop in reckless mood. As the weeks went on, this mood became the more frequent with her, and even when she had her most pinching access of parsimony, there was

one luxury in which she never stinted herself. Cups of the strongest Indian tea thickly punctuated her waking hours. It stewed perpetually in a large tin teapot by her bedroom fire. To repair thither after she had been out buying clothes, and there, cooling saucer in hand, to gloat over the charms of her purchases, was a pleasure that seldom failed to soothe and solace for a while. On these occasions she sometimes had the company of Anne Sendall, her landlady's niece and general assistant. Anne was a thickset, youngish woman, with a broad placid face, and reticent manner. Her own attire was always remarkably plain, but she seemed to have an extensive acquaintance among the sellers of second-hand finery, and she put Mrs. Vittie in the way of several gorgeous bargains, a good office which led to some amicable intimacy between them.

One Sunday morning, said Anne to Mrs. Vittie, whose bed she was rapidly making, while its owner fidgeted aimlessly about the room, "'Ave you never bin to Mr. Gregory's chapel, that's just round the corner? He's a loavely, godly man, and a preacher—oh my! It don't commence till twelve noon, and that conveniences me."

The words started Mrs. Vittie's thoughts on a track which led through haunts of memories still rife, though long unvisited. Her father had been an inoffensive man, who lived all his days in great fear of two devils, the elder and more terrible whereof he called God, and earnestly sought to propitiate. He had died, sorely doubtful of success, when Julia was quite a little girl; but he had already told her sundry facts about her Creator, which impressed her vividly. They were mainly embodied in anecdotes of a discouraging tendency, and if related about some ancient, ill-reputed Potentate would have been set down by fair-minded modern historians as the distorted exaggerations of enemies and ages. But little Julia did not criticise. She listened with puckered mouth and distended eyes, which alarm made the more unsymmetrical in their motions. Also, he had taken her to chapel, and of that her recollections were pleasanter; she had rather liked it, again in an uncritical spirit. The windows of the building had rounded tops, filled with fan-shaped panes of alternate yellow and blue, an arrangement

which seemed to her as admirable and marvellous as if they had framed the precious mediæval stains of flower and jewel; and the congregation had sung psalms and hymns, the more catching tunes and words of which she still fragmentarily remembered. In some of them she had joined later on, at the services which she had attended during her laundry-maid days; but since her marriage she had generally lived beyond easy reach of any place of public worship, other than Catholic churches, resorts more impossible than mosque or synagogue for a person who was wont to describe herself as "a respectable Protestant woman." This deprivation did not, however, cause her much concern; on the contrary, the sight of her neighbours setting off to their superstitious rites on Sundays and Saints' Days gave her a sense of superiority and security. With so many heathen papists about, it would be strange indeed if a respectable Protestant woman did not enjoy especial favour and protection from above. Thus she came to look upon non-attendance as positively meritorious. Since her rise in the world she had gone to church only two or three times, having lighted upon empty-seated, dismal establishments, where she doubted that the gospel was preached, and where there certainly were no shouts worth listening to, nor many admirers of her new bonnet and shawl. But now Anne Sendall's statement seemed to hold out prospects of something livelier, and recalled to her a forgotten source of interest and occupation.

So not many minutes afterwards Mrs. Vittie was escorted by Anne Sendall to a gallery seat near the towering pulpit of Blatchford Row Tabernacle, an edifice which spreads its circular shape amply enough to accommodate a fair-sized circus. They were a little late, and a very loud hymn was already in progress. A surging wave of sound met them as they opened the door, and set Mrs. Vittie's nerves vibrating. Never had she heard such music. It ran up and down her backbone as she mounted the gallery stairs. When it ceased, the atmosphere of the place began to work with less violent, yet still powerful, effect upon her senses. The hot May sunshine flared through the blindless windows, and the air it heated grew ever more strongly redolent of

peppermint and pomatum, greasy leather and musty wool. By the time that the head of Pastor Gregory was to be seen winding smoothly up between the spiral pulpit rails, she had become exceedingly susceptible of eloquence; and on this morning the preacher was even unusually impressive. The text of his sermon was the chorus of a stirring revivalist hymn, "There's more to follow"; his application of it was to the endlessness of an eternity of torment. His treatment of this inexhaustible theme was vigorous and realistic. He spoke of millions upon millions of years and centuries, which would bring the tormented not one quarter of an hour—no, nor one minute; no, nor half a second—nearer to escape. He imitated the hissing of the flames, which would be growing hotter round them all that long time. In short, Mr. Gregory thoroughly understood the tastes of his patrons; they had come, he well knew, in quest of coarse, strong sensations, and he exerted himself to supply the demand abundantly. To Mrs. Vittie, with a blinding sunbeam struck across her eyes and these vaticinations reverberating in her ears, it seemed almost as if that awful period were on the verge of beginning. By the time that at a long hour's end the preacher ceased with dramatic abruptness, and called upon his audience to raise "More to follow," her light blue eyes were darting to and fro as rapidly as minnows in an agitated pool; and when, bouncing to their feet, the congregation burst into the strains of the hymn, she tried to join; but her disused, cracked voice quavered off in a shrill, henlike whoop, which somewhat abashed her. As they pushed their way down the gallery stairs the refrain rang on so dizzily in her head that she did not hear Anne, whose broad face looked no less placid, though better pleased than usual, inquire whether Mr. Gregory were not a "loavely preacher."

That night sleep was even slower than its wont in coming to her. Restlessly she tossed upon her hot feather-bed, thinking over Mr. Gregory's sermon. She regretted that she had had only a penny with her when the collection was taken up, and resolved to give at least sixpence on future Sundays. Not that she included herself at all specially in the comprehensive list of misbelievers and misdoers whom

the preacher had threatened, enumerating them with resonant thumps on the ecclesiastical drum. Nobody could call her a Sabbath-breaker, or an unbeliever, or a drunkard, or anything but a respectable, hard-working Protestant woman; if less hard-working now than heretofore, it was simply because she had become so much more respectable. Still, it was always hard to tell for certain what might have given offence, she said to herself, with a vague sense of quoting from the Psalms; a coin in the plate was one of the few things about the acceptability of which no doubt could be entertained, and she would not grudge that sixpence. She had repeated this to herself for a long while with the brain-sick reiteration which infests the sleep-forsaken, when all at once there flashed into her mind a vivid reminiscence of a small boy whimpering out a fearful imprecation in a dusky room, and then running away "as if the Ould One was after him." The association of ideas was probably to be found in the strong language of the sermon, and it was only natural that the whole episode of the stolen pouch should follow. She had, of course, often thought about it from time to time as the foundation-stone of her amazing good fortune; but hitherto she had always viewed it as a mark of divine favour, whenever she supposed it to have any other-worldly significance at all. Now it presented itself suddenly in a different light—a lurid one; and when at last she fell asleep she wandered into the mazes of very ugly nightmares.

On awakening in the morning she did not wholly emerge from them, and even her cups of deepest peat-brown tea failed quite to dispel their terrors. Her first act was to go out and buy herself a large second-hand Bible, and in the study of it she spent a great part of several successive days. For some time she found nothing reassuring in it. On the contrary, she lit, to her dismay, upon texts which recommended behaviour towards the desolate and afflicted scarcely reconcilable with her own treatment of "the little brat Tim got the purse of money off, and the father just after dying on him," as she clearly remembered. But one hot evening, as she was anxiously poring over the bold long primer type of the pages, with their puzzling fringe of small-type references, she had a sort of supplementary revelation. It occurred to her that if the

brat was an orphan, she was a widow, and she couldn't recollect ever having heard a word against widows out of that book. No, indeed, they were to be succoured and protected and ministered to. Yes, to be sure, she was a widow, and a respectable Protestant woman, certain to be safe enough. Mrs. Vittie's fears, however, had the persevering habits of the black fly, which, when driven in headlong flight from any attractive object, lights with a buzz upon the very nearest one, and briefly bides its time. And the nearest to Mrs. Vittie's self was her son Tim. After all, it was he who had actually done the deed, and suppose the action were to be taken amiss and remembered against the poor lad. But again she whisked off the fear in much the same way as before. And wasn't her son an orphan too? Why, to be sure he was, equally so well a fatherless orphan. The little brat needn't set himself up to be anything better. "The fatherless and the widows," that was herself and Tim to a pin's point, and if *they* hadn't a right to take what chances they could get, she wondered who had. From this peaceful mood she was presently disturbed by another distracting buzz. A random turn of a leaf set her spelling out the words, "And if I have wronged any man, I restore it to him fourfold." The forefinger, with which she had been guiding her unaccustomed eyes, paused there for some minutes. Perhaps such restitution was an indispensable preliminary, an essential condition to her claim upon all those soothing promises. It might be for anything she knew. "One never can tell where to have him," she said to herself dolefully. She had, it is true, some indistinct memories of statements, couched mainly in the graceful phraseology and agreeable imagery of sensational hymns, which conveyed the impression that everything could be set to rights for one's self on much easier terms, and if so, "to go wasting the money sending it back would be a sinful pity." But her conviction here was not strong enough to controvert effectually the theory started by her more recent studies. She sat anxious and perplexed.

Then once more she had a happier inspiration. For, if it came to that, after all, she said to herself, what was to hinder them of paying back the bit of money to the brat?

The "fourfold" she instinctively felt to be a negligible counsel of perfection; but the sum that had been in the pouch would seem nothing here or there these times to Timothy. What that amount was, she had never been definitely told. The Port Maguire neighbours had talked wildly; but she always conjectured it at a few pounds, and she knew well how nowadays her son could afford to pay down his hundreds, "nor think any more about it than if he were sowing turnip-seed." So why not do it, and be shut of the thoughts of it? She resolved that she would speak to Timothy on the subject the next time she saw him.

Her opportunity came on the following Sunday, when Timothy, calling in the sultry afternoon, found her drinking tea by the open drawing-room window, and complaining that her cup was thick with the blacks which floated in and settled themselves down on it. The big Bible was on a top-heavy little table beside her, and she put her cup on it in her bustle at his unexpected arrival, only to upset the whole thing immediately afterwards, thereby imperilling his new light-grey suit with widely scattered splashes of hot tea. This obviously ruffled his temper, but Mr. Gregory's sermon had again been very awakening, and Mrs. Vittie's eagerness to introduce the subject uppermost in her mind would not allow her to wait discreetly for a more propitious moment. She began almost at once, "Do you mind the little chap you got the purse off at Port Maguire that time?"

"Well, and what about it?" Timothy said, startled. "Has anything turned up?"

"I'm thinkin' it would be plaisin' to the Lord if you was to give them back what trifle of money was in it," said his mother.

"What the mischief is the old woman ravin' about?" Timothy said plaintively, as he gazed abstractedly up at the ceiling.

"You may find it was worth your while yet," said Mrs. Vittie, "and well worth it. What's the few pounds to people's immortal souls, when you're makin' mints? You could afford it now as aisy as walkin' downstairs. If you'll be ruled by me, you'll just take and pay it back to him, and have no more talk about it."

"And who the devil's talkin' about it except yourself, y'ould ape?" said Timothy. "That 'ud be a fine conthrivance for preventin' of trouble—stirrin' it up like a mud puddle. All I can say is I hope I'll be gettin' my health good until I play such a tomfool's trick. Immortal great-grandmothers in a sack!"

"Then I'll pay it back myself," said Mrs. Vittie, who had all along thought it not unlikely that she would be obliged personally to pay this premium, "I'd liefer save it up out of the trifle I'm gave than have it on my conscience against me, for all 'twas no doin' of mine. I wouldn't have axed you, only I thought you might remember the people's name; it's gone out of my bothered head."

"And you think I'd be tellin' you, supposin' I do?" said Timothy.

"It's all one whether you do or no, you ignorant lout," Mrs. Vittie said; "I'll recollect it presently, right enough. Or, anyway, I could write to their minister—that's the priest—about it. If they're quit out of the place by this time, that doesn't matter a pin, 'twill be off *my* conscience, whoever gits it. I'll be no great while savin' it up, if you *are* as mane as dirt, and I could send a money order."

"By jingo!" said Timothy, "if that's what you're up to, I'll take precious good care you'll get uncommonly little spare cash to be sendin' about the country mischief-makin', like a meddlesome old lunatic. Savin' up? I'll make it my business to see that you'll be a considerable of a time savin' up a couple of hundred pound, though you talk as if you could pick it out of the ditches."

"*Two hundred pound?*" said Mrs. Vittie.

"Two hundred," said Timothy.

"You lie!" said Mrs. Vittie. Ten pounds would have surprised her almost to incredulity.

"Every penny of it," said Timothy. "Where was you supposing I got the money I put into them companies to start with? Out of the little shanty of a shebeen at Kellystown? Lawks!"

"And you makin' a poor mouth to me all the while, and lettin' on you were destroyed if you gave me a crust of bread. Oh, it's yourself's the sweet son," said his mother.

"I've given you plenty," said Timothy. "There's few would have treated the likes of you as handsome, let me tell you. But if you want any more of it, you'd better shut up, and not give *me* any more of your fool's impudence. I'll keep you tight enough, you'll see, from this out, to hinder you goin' on with any bedlam vagaries. So that's all you've got by it."

Mrs. Vittie clearly perceived by Timothy's tone, and the expression of his large white face, that it would be worse than useless to pursue the subject further. She desisted at once, and almost at once started another, with an evident wish that their disagreement should be ignored. Timothy acquiesced so far that he was not more than slightly sullen during the remainder of his visit, and they parted quite amicably. But she was inwardly raging. Partly at the discovery that Timothy's booty had been so very much larger than he had ever given her to suppose; partly, and principally, at the frustration of her design for making an investment on her own account. When her son took leave of her, she was rather more cordial in manner than usual; their late dispute seemed to be quite forgotten. But as he walked away from the door, a faded capless head was thrust out of a window to watch him pass down the street, and the watching eyes rolled wrathfully in a face distorted by a grinning grimace. "Is it at the loss of me soul I'm to be, to save your pocket, and be hanged to you?" Mrs. Vittie soliloquised, "Just you wait, me fine gentleman. I'll get it out of you yet, if you was twice as big a sodden, sulky, turnip-faced, block of a dirty young schemer—yourself and your new silk hat." Then she called him some still uglier names, and shook her fist at him as he turned the corner.

After this incident, Mrs. Vittie continued to sit under Mr. Gregory in Blatchford Row Tabernacle, and to turn up texts in the black-cloth-covered Bible, and to drink strong tea by day, and lie awake at night. She also continued to shop occasionally, but with much-diminished zest and scope. For Timothy carried out his threat, and did from thenceforth supply her more sparingly with pocket-money. This stinting helped to feed and fan the wrath which on that Sunday afternoon had flared up in her heart, against what had

hitherto been the object of her least self-centred sentiment. During the greater part of Timothy's existence she had worked for his maintenance in as much comfort and well-being as her resources permitted, without any wish or expectation of personal advantage to accrue therefrom. In the years that had followed his great bit of good luck, her co-operation with him, though less free from ulterior motives, had been by no means entirely selfish. Even latterly, since his fortunes had soared into regions whither she could not any more reach to assist, she had still watched his progress with a satisfaction in some measure disinterested. Yet the feeling, gradually sapped by the encroachments of egotism and the withdrawal of opportunities for practical demonstration, had not been strong enough to stand the strain when Timothy's thwarting of her plan was suddenly made more intolerable by the discovery of his deceit towards her about the magnitude of his booty. She had been wont, for example, to take a pride, at least one degree removed from mere self-complacency, in the elegance of his array; now she hated the sight of him, and only with an effort could speak to him as civilly as her dependent circumstances made it expedient. The change, though apparently trivial, was like the shooting of a little bolt outside a door; it had the effect of shutting her up closer into the strait and stifling precincts of herself.

One day Anne Sendall offered another suggestion. There was a sort of bottle she knew of people taking that was first-rate for making them sleep. She herself, praise goodness, went off like a top every night from eleven to six, and seven on Sunday mornings, as regular as the clock; she wanted no bottles. But they said it was fine stuff, Richards's Balsamic Extract was the name, and it could be had of any druggist for two-and-nine. So the nearest chemist supplied a bottle to Mrs. Vittie, who often tested its virtues, and generally with success. Every now and then, however, it would happen that the dose not only failed to make her drowsy, but had an opposite effect, so that she grew wider awake, and all her perceptions were sharpened, all her sensations intensified. On such occasions she hated Timothy more than ever, and was more terrified by Mr.

Gregory's pulpit-eloquence, and more convinced that her own future prospects were being sorely jeopardised by the obstacles which her son had thrown in the way of her wish to make restitution. She no longer desired that he should escape retribution; rather the reverse — himself and his gentleman's clothes. Although even when in this exasperated state she invariably maintained a discreet silence upon the matter which was uppermost in her mind, her abnormal excitement revealed itself in various unguarded ways. Timothy, finding her so twice or thrice, inquired in the hall of Anne and her aunt whether the old lady had been "taking anything," and was assured by them that nothing stronger than water ever entered their doors; they were themselves strict teetotallers, and the old lady was most abstemious. Perhaps just a thought flighty, they added. The question did not seem to Mr. Vittie one of any great importance, and he had asked it chiefly from curiosity. So long as she didn't bother him, he said to himself, she might be as flighty as she liked, and drink as much as she pleased. His visits to her grew rarer and briefer.

CHAPTER V

TIMOTHY VITTIE was, in truth, very fully occupied with rising in the world. The process went on with a celerity which was really phenomenal and not quite free from drawbacks. Foremost amongst these was the fact that it allowed him but a brief space to prepare himself for the high calling which awaited him by ridding himself of various encumbrances and disabilities adherent from his humbler days. Some of them, indeed, could be brushed off rapidly enough, by the ministrations of tailor and valet, but there were others less possible to deal with so expeditiously. He probably over-estimated their importance on the whole, not yet having sufficiently tested, in the elevated regions whither he was now ascending, the powers of the golden talisman that he bore. That they might fail him on such heights seemed to him conceivable, in the lack of experience to teach him how effectually his whining northern drawl would be drowned by the strains of the "still sweet-singing nightingale" nested in his pocket, and how, in consideration of his Midas-like gift, no uncouth ignorance and awkwardness on his part could hinder him from adorning whatever subject he might chance to handle. Nevertheless, his progress would certainly have been smoother and more pleasurable if he had had time to discard some of his earlier manners and customs before he came so far. His proneness, for example, to profess strong Protestant principles in a rather obtrusive way. He had derived it from his mother, whose habit of describing herself upon state occasions as "a respectable Protestant woman," had led him to regard that form of faith as a social distinction of the minor sort which can be self-conferred without expense. It was some time before he saw any reasons for wishing to abandon this.

In fact, as long as his path lay in circles no loftier than middle-class, he found pronounced evangelical sentiment both appropriate and useful. But when on his spiral way he reached a point where social success and advancement began to seem hardly less important than commercial, the case was altered. For he discovered that among the people whom he soon learned to call "smart," the views he had been accustomed to support were very far from correct. Something of the nature of Catholicism was alone good form in religion, an approximation to Rome as close as could be made without actually quitting the Anglican paddock. Even what he had not yet unlearned to call "Black Popery" was by no means unfashionable, being generally regarded as a peculiarity which, though not perhaps exactly what one would like for oneself, seemed in one's neighbour picturesque and interesting. Moreover, it had a tendency to run in the oldest families. By his ignorance of these things, Mr. Vittie incurred some rather vexatious experiences. His talk about black Papists and true-blue Protestants gave evident dissatisfaction; his jokes about penances, pilgrimages, the Pope's toe, and other pious observances were coldly received, and cost him access to one or two very desirable houses, in the days before he had grown quite too rich to be snubbed by anybody. Thus he presently recognised the fact that he had handicapped himself, and missed an opportunity, by not making his début as the last of an ancient Irish Catholic line.

The blunder became especially clear on one occasion when Fortune led him to a magnificent bazaar at Richmond, got up to pay off the debt on the new parish church of Ginglestead, and energetically patronised by Society. At one of the stalls a Countess of Watermede was assisted by Lord Fintragh's youngest daughter, the Honourable Leila Roche, wearing a wonderful Japanese costume, which did not suit her a bit, some of her friends thought, but in which she struck Mr. Timothy Vittie as being the finest girl he had ever set eyes on. None the less, old customs were too strong for him, and so got the better of his wish to please, that when she graciously called his attention to a photograph of St. Cyril's highly ornate interior, he ill-advisedly

followed his huxter's instinct for cheapening, and replied, "Well, now, half a guinea's a stiffish price ; and you might swear it was a Papist chapel." At which remark the Honourable Leila turned down her mouth-corners and raised her eyebrows disdainfully. And though he hastened to make amends for his slip by pronouncing the expensive photograph "a very nice article," and purchasing six copies of it, and refusing the change out of his banknote, he was shown clearly that he had failed to efface the bad impression. The charming teacup-patterned toilet retired into the background, and would not be tempted into any further dealings with him ; so that his only resource was to ingratiate himself as much as possible with little Mrs. Filgate, St. Cyril's vicar's wife, who also assisted at this stall, and who appeared to be on terms of some intimacy with Miss Roche. This he achieved with so much success, won by practical proofs of a deep interest in parochial matters, that a few days later he received a cordial invitation from the vicarage to come down there and inspect the sacred edifice of which he had become such a liberal benefactor. As Mr. Vittie had ascertained that Miss Roche was staying with her married sister in the neighbourhood of Ginglestead, he did not hesitate to accept the vicaress's invitation, and soon after his arrival saw reason to applaud himself for the move. The Ball-Simpsons, Miss Roche's hosts, were the great people of the little place, and none the less so for being notoriously hard-up. Their financial embarrassment, it is true, was of the sort whose effects must presumably be felt in some remote quarter, as in the case of the persons ostensibly most concerned it produced no signs of pinching, and appeared quite compatible with the maintenance of all the paraphernalia of wealth, from a deer park to the latest freak of fashionable millinery or upholstery. Still, their difficulties were well known to all their neighbours, and frequently referred to by the large section who considered that they gave themselves airs, although, as everybody was aware, Mr. Simpson was simply of no family whatever. They certainly could not be accused of that offence against Mr. Vittie. On the contrary, they went out of their way to be civil, even so far as to call at the vicarage solely for the

purpose of making his acquaintance and asking him to dinner. The rapid progress of the intimacy which ensued may be inferred from what happened on his fourth morning at Ginglestead.

It was a Sunday morning, and the vicarage party, Mr. Vittie included, had, of course, duly appeared in St. Cyril's at eleven o'clock. So had a party from the Manor, which was not by any means a matter of course, the Ball-Simpsons being regrettably irregular in their attendance, sometimes remaining at home, and sometimes, much more reprehensibly, driving past to service at St. Andrew's in the adjacent parish. On this occasion they had been guilty of neither sin, and after service Mrs. Filgate, emerging alone, saw the Manor victoria waiting close by, with Mrs. Ball-Simpson and her sister already seated in it. The unusual graciousness of Mrs. Ball-Simpson's nod encouraged Mrs. Filgate to approach the carriage. She was elated, too, by a consciousness of the distinguished guest whom they were entertaining, and altogether felt herself in an unwonted degree entitled to be at her ease in county society.

"What a charming day it is, Mrs. Ball-Simpson!" she said airily. "I believe your husband and mine are having a chat, for I met Mr. Ball-Simpson just now on his way to the vestry."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Ball-Simpson, "Mr. Ball-Simpson was looking for Mr. Vittie, I think."

"Oh, indeed! and Mr. Vittie would probably be waiting for Fred," said Mrs. Filgate. "They were to have a confabulation after service about the west window. Such a delightful young man as he is. He wishes to give the church a stained window in memory of his maternal grandparents, old people, whose place was in the North of Ireland. But he is doubtful whether it would be quite right for him to do so, as they were Roman Catholics. The Vitties are a very ancient Roman Catholic family, you know, but his father became a convert to our Church. However, Fred is to consult the bishop about it. Such very nice feeling as it shows in the young man, doesn't it?"

But Mrs. Ball-Simpson said, "Very much *more* than merely nice feeling, I think. Mr. Vittie consulted *us* upon

the subject yesterday. We hope to persuade him to lunch with us this morning, and to come and stay at the Manor to-morrow. Don't let us keep you standing, Mrs. Filgate."

So the vicaress, rebuked and snubbed, became bitterly aware that she had presumed, and that Mr. Vittie was about to be rapt away from them into loftier spheres.

When, a few minutes later, Mr. Vittie was driving off Manorwards, as vis-à-vis to the two ladies, whom in his own mind he defined as "a lord's daughters," Mrs. Ball-Simpson said to him, "Poor Mrs. Toad was most gushing about your stained window, Mr. Vittie. Oh, by-the-by, you don't know the vicarage people by our name. We always call them the Toads. It's all the fault of this wicked girl." Mrs. Ball-Simpson glanced with mock reproach at her sister, whose aspect was even more fascinating in furs than in fantastic Japanese. "One day we were looking at the plans of that singularly hideous, dumpy little church tower, and Miss Leila said it was 'squat like a toad'—it's somewhere in the poets, you know—and the name has stuck to them ever since. It's rather a shame, for they really are very well-meaning people according to their lights. Chesterton actually took for a while to calling the vicar the 'Toad in the Hole'—the vicarage is such a funny, poky little place—but that was too outrageous. Leila was quite naughty enough."

"Ah, come now, upon my word, that was too bad of you, Miss Roche! You'll be quizzing me next," said Mr. Vittie.

Leila listened with mingled sensations. She was proud of her small pleasantry, and could not help feeling witty whenever she heard an allusion to it. But on the present occasion her enjoyment was almost completely spoiled by her wrath at the obvious advances which her sister seemed to be making on her behalf towards Mr. Vittie, whom she regarded as an utterly impossible and intolerable person. Being the youngest and prettiest of Lord Fintragh's daughters, Leila had planned herself a future in accordance with this particular fact, but had left out of consideration several others with which it was not in accordance at all. The most important of these had not yet come to her knowledge; for her father had chosen to keep her in ignorance about the extent of certain financial disasters which, since the time of her sister's

marriage, had overtaken him, and which would make her a portionless bride. Even if she had known her face to be her fortune, she would still have demanded of her destiny something brilliant enough to outshrine either of her sisters. And now Mabel, who, though the plainest of the family, had secured a show country place, with a quite presentable proprietor, was evidently expecting *her*, the beauty, to accept the attentions of this fat, smirking grocer, whose appearance and manners were equally unendurable, and whom, despite all his talk about painted glass, she strongly suspected of being an atheist, if not a dissenter. At this time Leila was sufficiently rooted in Church principles to feel that any such unorthodoxy could be atoned for only by an almost preternatural combination of more worldly gifts and graces ; while her social aspirations flew high enough to make her scarcely less exigent in her views of what should justify her in stooping to an undistinguished commoner. "I should think this creature might be called a commonest," she said to herself, exercising her talent for epigram, as some reflections of the sort passed through her mind. She earnestly hoped that the profferer of the appropriate coronet might be somebody nice, for her devotion to rank and riches was mingled with a little romance, and she now owned that if he were to resemble Mr. Vittie at all, the pleasure of acceptance would be seriously alloyed. But as for Mr. Vittie himself, it was really too monstrous an idea. Therefore she sat in haughty irresponsiveness to her sister's sallies and her admirer's insinuations, resolving to cut short her stay at the Manor, and fortifying herself with the thought of how thoroughly her father would have shared her sentiments about Mabel's preposterous protégé.

Her demeanour was a cause of anxiety to Mrs. Ball-Simpson, who discussed it after luncheon, severally, with her husband and her sister-in-law, Lady Peskett. "It will be more than provoking if she persists in giving herself airs," she said to the latter ; "for now is her time. At present he hasn't really been discovered, and he hasn't discovered himself. He thinks it a fine thing if one of us speaks civilly to him. But *that* won't last long. Just wait till he's been hunted through next season. I saw old Anne Cirencester

making herself vastly amiable to him at the Richmond bazaar, with her three daughters looking on in the background like the Three Fates ; but he didn't know she was anybody, and seemed rather to shut her up. I must say her rags were more fearful and wonderful even than usual. Chesterton has made all sorts of inquiries about him, and I'd be afraid to say how much he's worth this minute, and he's simply coining money. He might marry *anybody*. So if Leila doesn't make the most of her chances they'll be over before we know where we are. Just now he *is* deeply smitten."

"You should speak seriously to her," said Lady Peskett, "and tell her how very *wrong* she would be doing. He must be something immense. One sees his advertisements everywhere, with those great sausages and his canary-coloured vans. Truth to say, I should think them rather horrid myself, if it was me. But, no doubt, he'll soon turn himself into a syndicate, or a company, or something, and then nobody'll see that they belong to him. Or he might give up that sort of thing entirely after a time, and go in exclusively for company-promoting. I daresay Leila would like that better."

"I wouldn't," said Mrs. Ball-Simpson; "there's a certain substantiality about sausages and vans. Company-promoting may be all very well while it lasts, but it has a way of vanishing into thin air. What I hope is that Leila may choose to behave like a rational being before it's too late."

And later in the afternoon Mrs. Ball-Simpson said to her husband, "Have you sounded him about those shares and things?"

"Not exactly," he replied, and there was some gloom in his manner, "but I've ascertained clearly enough that he'll expect a *quid pro quo*. If we can do anything towards furthering his views about your sister, we may get something out of him, but not else. You'd better tell her plainly that we've no intention to put up with the nuisance of having the boulder about the place indefinitely for her to practise her airs and graces on. She'll find that she's only made a fool of herself, and let him slip."

"I can't well quarrel with Leila," her sister said, reflectively, "because, you see, if we are to let this place to

the Shapcocks for the summer, we must send over the children, at least, to Barnaglen. I declare things are awfully mixed and hard to manage. But I'll try to give her a hint."

Mrs. Ball-Simpson's hint did not err on the side of subtlety, and it was ill received. Still, she saw reasons for thinking that it would not be thrown away. The ensuing conversation had led Leila to assert vehemently that she would rather marry poor Archer Considine. Now he was the son of neighbours at Kilcashel, a youth so charmingly detrimental that an incipient flirtation between him and Miss Roche had been the real cause of her present visit to England. So her sister rejoined, "I've no doubt *you* might be fool enough, my dear, but, fortunately, 'poor Archer' isn't. On the contrary, I hear he's been yachting with the Kendals, and paying great attentions to an American girl with millions—several, I believe. He's too much sense to imagine that a pair of paupers could possibly make a match."

"Paupers! A pair! Why, you and Annette had ten thousand pounds apiece, I know. That's not millions, of course—but paupers, what do you mean?"

In the circumstances, Mrs. Ball-Simpson felt that it was expedient to let Leila know how little she need expect a portion as opulent as her elder sisters' had been. The revelation was an entirely unlooked-for one to Leila; and Mrs. Ball-Simpson observed with satisfaction that she appeared to ponder on it deeply. Mr. Vittie's summons to London on urgent business, which occurred just then, seemed to his hostess rather well-timed. On the evening after his departure she talked much to Lady Peskett, Leila sitting by, about how far happier, *after all*, the people might be who married for love, not minding small means, and contenting themselves to settle down in little, cosy houses, where they could have their children always with them, and no trouble about entertaining, or dressing, or anything of the sort. Then they discussed a bet reported from a West End club, to the effect that Mr. Vittie would be a peer within the next half-dozen years. Lady Peskett was sceptical, saying, "Make it ten, and I admit that I wouldn't take any odds against it." And she went on to consider the probability of his selecting some old Irish title, perhaps

reviving that of Glenmasorrel, which had anciently been in the Vittie family. In conclusion, she made a small wager with Mrs. Ball-Simpson that he would fall a victim to the stalking of old Anne Cirencester.

Miss Roche retired to rest that night in a perturbed mood. The disclosure about her father's difficulties, which explained much that she had hitherto ascribed to his habits of grumbling and stinginess, was the first bit of seriously bad news that she had ever heard. It weighed heavily upon her mind, the more so because she thought it likewise accounted for some disagreeable things that she had noticed of late : a decrease in the amount of consideration bestowed upon her, a tendency to resist her demands and to disable her judgment. The alteration, indeed, was very slight—so faint that she had doubted whether it existed save in her fancy. But now that she perforce believed there was a reason for it, she believed also that it would probably continue and increase, a prospect which displeased her extremely. Yet though it wrought some changes in her opinion and sentiment, they did not immediately affect her attitude towards Mr. Vittie. She found herself compelled to recognise the impossibility of Archer Considine, without at all admitting that the impossibility of his rival had become any the less. At the same time it did cause her some inconsistent chagrin to hear Mabel express doubts occasionally as to his ever reappearing at the Manor, or caring to keep up the acquaintance. Mrs. Ball-Simpson did so from strategic motives, but her uncertainty was not feigned. In fact, when Mr. Reeves, the butler, said to Maria Carter, the first housemaid, that he would be sorry to have an empty soda-water bottle depending, one way or the other, on Lady Toplofty giving Carrots-and-Turnips the sack, or Carrots-and-Turnips never giving her the chance of it, he did but express, in his unrefined diction, a doubt which was exercising the minds of his social superiors.

Timothy Vittie himself, had they but known, departed quite resolved to pursue his courtship of Miss Roche. He knew well enough by this time how little he need fear a rebuff from anybody except the person most concerned, and of even that he had no very grave apprehensions. It seemed

probable to him that when he was at leisure to return, he would find his "girl," as he already called her in his own mind, become properly alive to the value of the attentions which she seemed now inclined to underestimate. Meanwhile he did not regret the business that temporarily interrupted his wooing, as he considered that it would make time for the influence of Miss Roche's family to work in his favour. His own experience had led him to rate this advantage highly. For in the early stages of his career, when still nothing greater than a magnate in a little Irish country town, he had more than once acted as go-between in the making of a match, and had seen how very small a voice in the matter was allowed to the bride-elect. Therefore he anticipated with much confidence that as soon as his back was turned, this haughty young lady would be peremptorily desired by her elegant and imposing sister, and her finely-got-up brother-in-law, and perhaps by her father, the old lord over in Ireland, to behave herself, and let them have no more of her turning up her nose at what was plenty good enough for her betters—these instructions, of course, to be couched in whatever were the equivalent terms among the aristocracy. And accordingly he took his leave with few misgivings.

The affairs calling him back to town had to do with a crisis in the negotiations which were going on for the conversion into a syndicate of the *Endless Sabbath* business. It was to be a big thing, amalgamated with several other profitable and important concerns of a like nature, else Mr. Vittie would not have deigned, nowadays, to put himself out of his way about the matter. As it was, he thought it worth while to make an appointment with Mr. Rennell, the editor, who duly arrived one November forenoon at Mr. Vittie's very splendid mansion. The editor was accompanied by his colleague, Professor Jeffares, and by no less a person than popular-preacher Gregory, who owned many shares in the *Endless Sabbath*, and had a scheme to propound for the inclusion of the Blatchford Row Tabernacle property in the new syndicate. These times Mr. Vittie was quite a great enough man to keep even so distinguished a deputation waiting, and the trio were left to

themselves for some minutes in the sombrely sumptuous library, where the air was redolent of Russia-leather and cedar-wood, and softly brilliant with the shaded lights of fantastic electric lamps, the weather being seasonably dull. The two editors fidgeted at the delay, but Mr. Gregory, after his manner in spare moments, wrote post cards with a fountain pen. He accomplished the greater part of his correspondence in this way, a thrifty device, which economised his time and advertised its value at one stroke. He got two cards written before Mr. Vittie came. One of them was addressed to the managers of Beulah Chapel, Hampstead, where his eldest son ministered, informing them that unless they could see their way to raising the young man's salary, he would be constrained to seek a wider sphere of usefulness. The second replied to a request from the journal of the Christian Young Ladies' Zenana Mission Prayer Union, for the favourite line of the favourite verse of Mr. Gregory's favourite hymn. The favourite line of the favourite verse of Mr. Gregory's favourite hymn was: "Thou, O Lord, art ALL I want," and he carefully underlined the "all" twice for small capitals.

Then Mr. Vittie appeared with fitly sparing apologies for his delay, and they began to transact their business. Matters had made smooth and satisfactory progress, and he was foreboding nothing less than any unchancy interruption, when they were suddenly broken in upon by an intruder, who had all the while been journeying towards them.

It happened that on this particular morning Mrs. Vittie, away in Blatchford Crescent, was suffering from the effects of some Richards's Balsamic Extract, which had failed to give her a restful night. In such circumstances she always was, as Anne Sendall said, "like a thing on wires," and prone to be seized by rash and idle impulses. To-day an unfortunate blunder of Timothy's both suggested to her and made practicable a piece of very inconvenient imprudence. He had inadvertently sent her a remittance in an envelope which bore his address. Hitherto he had studiously concealed it from her, always telling her he lived where anybody he wanted could find him, which delicate intimation of

his wish not to be called upon by her she had willingly accepted. All the immensities of London scared her, and made her as a rule unenterprising; but this morning her nervous restlessness and craving to be doing something overrode prudence and fear, so that she determined to go and visit her son. Immediately after breakfast she set off alone in a cab, without having decided what she would say to him when she saw him; whether she would thank him for the remittance, or reproach him for its meanness.

Many alarming incidents had befallen Mrs. Vittie on her drive through a yellow fog. Its interminable length terrified and bewildered her like a bad dream. She suspected the driver of intending to kidnap and murder her. They had been imprisoned in several blocks; they had been almost run into by a dray; and she reached her son's door in a jarred and overstrung state. Thus it happened that just when two of Mr. Vittie's visitors were taking leave, Mr. Gregory lingering behind for a few words on his own peculiar business, there entered to them a small, elderly woman, gaudily attired, fanning herself with her feathery bonnet, and hurling back defiance at the dismayed, pursuing footman. Her relief at the sight of a familiar face after all those perils trampled down her newly sprung antipathy to it, and she rushed upon Tim effusively with an account of her adventures, beginning with the conduct of the "livery-man" who had tried to turn her off from her own son's door, and "had took and given her impidence" because she slipped past him and made her own way upstairs, and ending with regrets that they had ever left the old country, where "the two of them were snigger together in the little house at poor Port Maguire, bedad were they, even if they had to put up with the few hens and the poor pig in along. Did Tim remember how he would be contending with it sometimes for the dry corner? She wished to goodness they were back there again."

It was hard to silence her, and, before he could hurry her into another room, he knew she had said several very awkward things, while her uncivilised appearance and manners were in themselves quite sufficient to make an embarrassing situation. However, he put the best face he could upon

the matter by hastening to rejoin Mr. Gregory, and re-entering the library with the ejaculation, "Ah, this poor old second cousin of mine—it's a sad thing to see her so upset. She's quite wandering in her mind to-day. I'm apprehensive at times"—the notion had never suggested itself to him before, but now flashed upon him like an inspiration that might be worth working up at leisure—"that she'll have to be placed under restraint."

"Perhaps the bustle of our big Babylon is too much for her," Mr. Gregory said soothingly. "She might be better, as she says herself, in her old home."

Timothy shook his head dissentingly. He wished to convey that this was one of her hallucinations, but he could not think at once of the right word. "Oh, that's all an abbreviation of intellect," he said, when he seemed to have found it; "she's used to big places." Mr. Gregory, on his part, was accustomed to the conversation of people who stumble among many syllables, in fact he occasionally did so himself. "Well," he said, "it's a sad affliction, and it does no service to a business man to have a near relative—I beg pardon—a second cousin to be sure you said—so situated; sets people looking out for signs of a bee in your bonnet—open mouths and flies, you know. And such things always transpire. Couldn't you try a little change for her? Let her travel about a bit? But if, unhappily, you should find the measure you mentioned necessary, I may mention that my brother, who is a medical man, has a private establishment in a very charming retired spot in the West of Ireland, which might suit you. The situation's most secluded, and the afflicted inmates are as much out of the way—of excitement—there as they well could be. I'll answer for it that my brother would take every precaution. You see, it's a principle of mine to buy up any opportunity the Lord puts in my way for doing a stroke of business," he said, chuckling, and said truly, being somewhat an adept in the graceful art of self-advertisement, "even in jest." Not that he spoke now solely to that end. He was a man of superabundant energy, which often impelled him to intervene in other people's concerns quite without ulterior motives, and, to do him justice, generally with benevolent intentions.

Timothy pondered much upon this piece of advice, although the statements which had led to it had been merely extemporised by him to meet the emergency, without considering whether there were anything in his mother's mental condition to justify any of them. His impression at the time had been that her escapade was nothing more than the natural tomfoolery of an old woman, against which he had tried to guard himself by withholding his address. But his attention being turned that way, he observed repeatedly what seemed to betoken something abnormal in her state. He was at first loth to admit the fact. The overbalancing of a mind which he had so long been accustomed to regard as exceptionally stable and shrewd—"I never met her match for weighing out short half-pounds," he said to himself—was, even under these altered conditions, a bewildering, uncomfortable sort of catastrophe, and rather than contemplate it, he tried to account for his mother's evident flightiness by some less serious hypothesis. Very unreasonably he felt affronted by Mr. Gregory's notion of "locking her up for a loony"; but the alternatives which the same authority had suggested struck him as sensible enough. Probably the old woman might do better back in Ireland, or at any rate out of London, so that he need no longer dread an untoward repetition of her visit. Probably, too, a little jaunt somewhere might, as Mr. Gregory had said, be good for her, and put whatever queer stuff she had taken up out of her head. Neither he nor Mr. Gregory was aware that her eccentricities had been started by the eloquence of Blatchford Row Tabernacle. Therefore, as just at this time the flotation of another enterprise required his presence for a few weeks in Paris, he placed himself and his mother in the hands of a competent courier and an experienced maid, and travelled, in a *train de luxe*, to the gay capital. His intention was, after his stay there, to revisit Ireland, and settle his mother in some quiet, out-of-the-way place, not, of course, too near her former abode.

The results of this move were not altogether what he could have wished. For soon after their arrival in Paris, Mrs. Vittie developed symptoms of a dementedness more

marked, as well as more awkwardly reminiscent, than she had yet displayed, and when the attack passed off with apparent completeness before any steps could be taken for placing her in durance, he felt strongly that he was likely to find her a heavy handful at large. No better plan occurred to him than to carry out the second half of his original design ; and having done his business in Paris, he transferred his party to Connemara with the intention of seeking a retired place of residence wherein to leave his mother, unless, indeed, a return of her malady and memories should render it expedient to patronise an establishment such as that recommended by Mr. Gregory. And this traces Mr. Vittie's fortunes to the point of his exit, already reported, from the Imperial Hotel at Tubbernaglen.

CHAPTER VI

ONE March morning about this date, Judy MacSheehan, resident in Port Maguire, rose from her bed with a creak in every joint of her body, which, as it was not yet quite twenty years old, she had not come to recognise as a regrettable matter of course. On the present occasion, however, she had scant leisure to consider the subject, for she was the only member of the long Paddy MacSheehan family who could just then contrive to get about at all. The others were all down with a plague which was infesting the country, and which, in such places as Port Maguire, found an abundance of non-resistant victims. It filled the bones with frosty fire, and the head with aching heaviness, and the heart with a throbbing sickness; a state of things whose whole force is felt by the dweller between mud and straw. These afflictions had visited Judy in a greatly mitigated form, and this actual immunity, aided by much good nature, mingled with a little of the pride which everybody takes in any sort of distinction, enabled her to drag herself up early, and set about doing what she could for the invalids. She coaxed a smouldering peat-sod into a flicker of pink flame under the big black kettle, and found a grain of tea, enough just to give a name to a jug of hot drink. When she carried it round to the several lairs, she met with a varying reception, plaintive or peevish, according to the patient's mood. Her favourite Murtagh, the spoilt eldest boy, bade her "go to blazes with her ould brashes." Less-made-of Pather said dolorously, "Ah no, Judy darlint, I couldn't be lookin' at anythin'. And sure it's yourself'll be gettin' your death streelin' about after us in the could." Some of the younger children drank eagerly, for it was warm and sweet; they would gladly have had more. But when she came to her

parents, every other anxiety was swallowed up in one absorbing fear ; for both seemed to have taken a turn for the worse, and to be "cruel bad altogether."

In her resourceless panic, Judy could improvise no better expedient than an appeal to some neighbour of wider experience, who might have at least counsel, if no more material aid to offer her. So she flapped on her old shawl, and went out into the blustery chill. As she stood on the door-sill she faced the sea, across a broad strand of fretted sward and shingle. It lay leaden-hued to match the sky, which was all impenetrably roofed over, save for a narrow amber pane let in along the horizon. Heavy rollers trailed a sharp white foam band to and fro with antiphonal roaring. While she looked up and down the cabin row, in which her own dwelling occupied a central position, she was considering to whom she might best resort. Her choice was restricted by her knowledge that several of the neighbouring households were in as sorry plight as their own : the Egans, for instance, must be, she thought, very bad this morning, as not a quiver of smoke had yet appeared above the blackened hole in their thatch.

The decision she formed was that she would apply to the McQuaides. Nothing, indeed, had made her hesitate about doing so, except the circumstance that they stood some degrees higher in the social scale than the MacSheehans. In places like Port Maguire, where these degrees are many and minute, with much importance attached to them, there is often a habit of shrinking sensitively from any conduct that may be misconstrued as evincing a desire to climb and intrude. The lines of demarcation, though firmly drawn, are intricate and fine, as they are reported to have been in more cultured circles long ago, before a coarse gold-wash effaced them all. Seldom are any very definite facts brought forward to account for the current opinion that the "So-and-So's were always very respectable people entirely." But it none the less confers rank and status. There could be no doubt that to this category the McQuaides belonged, although their present circumstances were not so prosperous as they had been in the days when Port Maguire knew them first as the owners of a newly started commercial establishment,

which was commonly called "grand." The shop was now shut up, and the family seemed to live chiefly upon Christy McQuaide's earnings as a fisherman; but their prestige had not departed. They were rumoured to be first cousins to a priest, and, sure enough, there was a Father McQuaide known of in a parish not any great way away. Then the two young cousins, Conroys, who lived with them, had attended school uninterrupted, like most of their contemporaries, by spells of crow-scaring and cattle-herding, and were understood to be elegant scholars. Moreover, Ally McQuaide, Mrs. McQuaide's sister-in-law, worked much herself, and had taught Delia Conroy to work, at a sort of delicate thread-edging, things which in themselves conferred distinction, letters and the fine arts being highly esteemed at Port Maguire. To set against all this, it is true, Delia had lately gone as sewing-maid to Shanabawn House at Kilcashel, a step which, only that the Considines were "rael ould ginty," would have been regarded as a step tending decidedly downward in the social scale, with so little favour is domestic service viewed in Port Maguire. And, a more serious matter, the younger son Ned had about this time become a water-bailiff over at the Fintragh River, thus adopting a pursuit with which "dacint people had no call to be meddlin'," and which caused the countenance of Port Maguire sometimes to turn upon him with cold disapproval when he visited the place. Still, the collective respectability of the McQuaides remained unquestioned.

The present grave emergency, however, made all such considerations trivial. Judy did not pause long to remember anything except that "Ally McQuaide was always pleasant-spoken and good-natured," nor did Ally now belie this character. For, accompanying Judy home, she prescribed and supplied some buttermilk whey, and lent a warm rug, and promised to look in "now and again, while Judy would be runnin' for the doctor," a walk of several long miles. Furthermore, she delivered the blissfully welcomed opinion that they would "all presently be finely again, no fear, wid the help of God."

It was necessary for Judy to provide herself with a "red ticket," entitling the MacSheehan family to the attendance of

the dispensary doctor, and this might most conveniently be procured on her way from Mr. Felix O'Loughlin, of the Rathdoran Farm, who as a Poor Law Guardian had authority to distribute such privileges. But here she met with unexpected difficulties and delays. For when, having knocked faintly and ineffectually at the front door, she ventured round to the back, she was disconcerted by finding Mr. O'Loughlin at breakfast, not alone, which would have been alarming enough, but in the society of a total stranger. The farmer's guest was the confidential butler of a very grand English gentleman who had just rented Moygarna Lodge up at the head of Lanlone Creek for sporting purposes, and had now despatched this member of his household to make preliminary arrangements. Mr. Stephen Hutton, in a light grey suit, late his master's, enlivened by a sky-blue and scarlet plaid necktie of his own fancy, looked quite worthy of his high calling. To Felix O'Loughlin such company seemed an honour and glory, and he was not above liking to be discovered in the enjoyment of it even by a person of such extreme insignificance as a little girl up from Port Maguire. He could not forego the opportunity to show off a bit. So to Judy's timorous request he replied with dignity, "Oh, you must wait, Miss What's-your-name, you must wait till I and this gentleman have done our breakfasts. Then I may see about the matter. Och, bad cess to it, girl; can't you stand where you are, and not be shovin' yourself between Mr. Hutton, of Moygarna, and the spark of fire?" Judy had been moving with the object of slipping into a retired corner beside the hearth, not commanded by the two formidable faces that confronted her across the table with its half-cover of chequered brown linen, bearing a huge tin teapot and some black bottles. But at this rebuke she stood still, rooted in confusion, and could only retreat deeper under the grey woollen eaves of her shawl, as Mr. Hutton, suddenly sticking a glass into one eye, focussed a steady stare upon her. He had just begun to address her in a rallying tone, when his host, impatient to take up the thread of their gossip, interrupted him. "Now, now, Mr. Hutton, lave the girl alone, if you'll be so good. Her bit of business'll keep most uncommon cool till I'm at liberty to attend to it. Fill your

glass, man ; you've hardly warmed your mouth yet wid this stuff, and don't ax me where you'll come by any better, for I couldn't tell you. But there's plenty more of the same where it come from ; I know that anyway, which is more than the peelers do. So when are your people comin' to reside, Mr. Hutton?"

"Oh, whenever they've had their *quantum suff.* of the bloomin' yachtin' business. I left the bathin'-machine at Marseilles and overlanded it ; but they were to cruise around a while longer, so I've understood. I've a notion that some of our party meant to have another go at Monte Carlo before they clear out of the Sunny South. That young Considine would, if he got the chance, I know as well as if I was inside him. He's along with us, you may be aware—the young hopeful of the old gentleman up there at Shanabawn House, I think you call it."

"Me soul to glory, is that where Mr. Archer is? It's news to me, bedad. I was under the belief he'd gone somewheres to study ; but very belike that might be just what he tould poor Sir Herbert to contint him. And what do they be up to now, at Monty——?"

"Why, roulette—cards, you know. We've had a gamblin' lot on board this trip, gents and ladies, but this young Considine banged them all. Had bloomin' bad luck too, I farncy. He's a bright specimen. But since I landed here I've been wonderin' how he raises the needful ; for he doesn't carry on his horse-racin', not to mention other little amusements, under a heavy cash figure, and to judge by the look of their family shanty and premises I wouldn't say that they were, so to speak, bloomin' Croesuses."

"Stone-broke, you might say, Sir Herbert is," said Mr. O'Loughlin, "whatever way the Creasys may be ; I never heard much talk of *them* in this counthry. But the Considines—time was when they owned as fine a property as you could name in the kingdom of Connaught. Only by all accounts himself was much such another one in his young days as Mr. Archer here ; and what wid this, and what wid that, they do say the most he has to live on now is the rint he gets on the grazin' he has let to Thompson, the English sheep-farmer. It's a very sizable big block of

land, runnin' right up and down the long valley there back of the say-face of Kilcassel and on beyond towards Port Maguire. But I've heard tell he made a divil of a bad bargain wid Thompson, and takes little enough out of it, considerin' the land's the heart of the counthry for kindness—a dale too good for sheep. 'Twas Sir Herbert's father put the people off it before my time, and they shot at him twice; but everybody liked poor Sir Herbert: he's plisant and off-handed. However, at the present moment of time Thompson's said to be swearin' black and white that he isn't makin' anythin' out of it; so Sir Herbert might be likely enough to have it threw on his hands. It's quare times is in it. There's he wid the roof leakin' over his head and a couple of ould scarecrows of cripples lettin' on to be keepin' up the place on half wages. I believe the Lord Liffinant was stoppin' wid them at Shanabawn in the ould days. And there's ould Lord Fintragh up at Barnaglen, just fornint him across the river, wid maybe three thrashy garrons in the stable, you wouldn't be seen drivin' out of a fair; and I remimber his father Master of the Foxhounds, when I was a boy, wid thirty hunters, and a parishful employed lookin' after them. I wouldn't say it mightn't be maneness to some extent in this man, for mane he is; but he's hard up too, sure enough."

"And what the dickens else would you expect a bloomin' landowner to be?" said Mr. Hutton. "Land's all-fired dirt. Fi-nance and commerce is what's got the money in it. If you want to keep your own pocket plumpy, you're bound to have a hand in the other fools' ones; and commerce is the way to do it—commerce and fi-nance. Make your fortune, and then you can have as much rotten land as you like along with all the rest of the luxuries, if that's what you cotton to. Look at us; our concern is swipes, and we could buy up this dirty distric' as easy as drivin' round it, out and out, let alone rentin' the shootin' and fishin'. But talkin' of that, there'll be trouble when the governor arrives, unless your infernal, impudent thieves of salmon-poachers keep themselves out of our pleasure grounds. We've got every drop of the water down to the creek's enterance, and there these ruffians are every day in dozens shovin' their

blarsted old tubs right under our noses. That'll have to be put a stop to."

"Oh, be jabers, you'd better whist wid that sort of talk in this company!" Mr. O'Loughlin said, winking comically at Judy MacSheehan. "Maybe you don't know that one comes out of the middle of a big nest of poachers—terrors they are down at Port Maguire—and she'd take your life as soon as bait a line, begor would she; a desperit character *she* is."

All the farmer in Felix O'Loughlin had resented the butler's contumelious disparagement of "the lan'," and as his sense of his hospitable duties withheld him from any serious expression of his feelings, he relieved them temporarily by this caricature of ferocity. He nothing recked that he was heightening the already intense distress of his other visitor. Judy's detention, lengthened out for her by extreme anxiety and embarrassment, seemed interminable, and a touch was added to her misery when Mr. Hutton said blandly, "Ah, my dear, don't let him make you uneasy. You've only got to keep that face on you, and you needn't mind who takes away your character." On being thus directly addressed, Judy got further into her shawl. "If I had the ticket, I could be runnin' on," she murmured wistfully under her breath, with the result merely of frightening herself, as nobody else heard the remark.

But at this darkest moment relief was nigh. In bustled the daughter of the house, on complacent shoulders wearing the cost of a sturdy calf converted into beady shot-silk, and on her conscious head the price of many fresh eggs, in the shape of a huge and feathery picture-hat. She had, indeed, been making her toilet, instead of carrying out her father's orders about rashers of bacon, and he greeted her with comments on their delay, which gave Mr. Hutton an opportunity to be facetious. "Lardy tardy!" he ejaculated. But Miss O'Loughlin's attention was for the moment engrossed by the presence of Judy MacSheehan, curtesying meekly close by, a visitor of whom she entirely disapproved on such a genteel occasion. So she hastened to sweep away the intruder, stirring up her father to provide the ticket, and impatiently accelerating his signature of it, over which he,

in the novelty of office, was disposed to linger, observing, "Bedad now, it's the Poor Law Guardians git plinty of business, if there's no pay attached, wid people runnin' after them when they're at their meals." Till at last came, "Here, me dear, take your ticket, and be off wid you"; whereupon Judy, fleeing with her prize, was several perches down the lane before Bridget O'Loughlin had said, "I wonder you couldn't ha' let her wait outside. Them's no sort to be bringin' into the house."

Judy hurried to meet further misfortune. For when she reached Dr. Moloney's house, the maid told her that the master had been bad with the *flue*, and was gone off for a holiday, himself and Mr. Hanmer, to Tubbernaglen. There was another doctor comin' to mind the dispensary, but no sign of him yet. He might be very apt to not be in it till to-morrow or next day. With this doubtful prospect Judy would have returned disappointed home, had she not presently encountered a better-informed acquaintance, from whom she learned that the locum tenens had actually arrived, and was just then accessible at the dispensary. Having there obtained a promise of a speedy visit, she set forth with a relieved mind on her long trudge homewards, and not far from the dispensary, she came where, under the lee of a peaty bank, on the bog's edge, at Moygarna cross-roads, a small cluster of people, who had also been seeking medical advice, were halted for a farewell gossip before they went their several ways. A sudden March shower meanwhile was gustily raining itself out. They all knew Judy, and some of them called her to come and sit in the shelter the way she wouldn't get dreeped; so she came and sat down between Mrs. Rourke and old Winny Corry. Each of them had a bottle, both of which now held medicine, but only one of which had been originally designed for that purpose; the other still wearing half a porter label. This, however, was nothing at all out of the way in Kilcashel, where mixtures and lotions are often carried home in much queerer receptacles. The critical dissatisfaction with which Mrs. Rourke was scrutinising it had different grounds. She held it up against the light, tilted at various angles; she peered intently round its baffling brownish-black curves;

then she uncorked it, and smelt it ; finally, she tasted its contents with a finger, and shook her head disgustedly, pursing up her mouth in protest against the flavour. "As bitter as sut!" she said then. "Sure, I'd never persuade the crathers to take a drop of that, if I brought it to them on me bended knees. Well enough I knew, by the colour of it, that it wasn't the right stuff, and so I tould himself inside there ; but I might spare meself the trouble of talkin' to the likes of him, that's a stranger we never set eyes on before. Him we had on Tuesday was better, if he was no great things."

"And as ignorant as the dirt on the road," said a querulous voice from a hollow in the bank.

"I tould him," Mrs. Rourke continued, "that the stuff done me Jimmy all the good in the world last year when the cramps took him, was yeller-coloured, and the best stuff ever we got out of the dispensary. That was what I axed him for to-day, but he's took and gave me this ugly brash, that I might as well be throwin' to the hins, if it wouldn't poison them, for all the good of it 'ud be to set the children bawlin', and they as cross as weasels already wid the whoopin'-cough tormintin' them."

"You're a great fool, ma'am," said the Widdy Byrne, "if it's that they're bad wid, to not git ould Nannie Scully to them. She'd give you a resate worth twinty of them dochter's messes, that's made of nobody knows what."

"Sure, ma'am, how could I tell I'd be disappointed of gettin' the right bottle, that was grand whatever it was made of?" said Mrs. Rourke sadly. "Bedad, now, Mrs. Corry, that one of yours has very much the appearance of it. 'Twas just that yellery colour. And a taste on it some-thin' like peppermint. I suppose, ma'am, you don't get e'er a bitter flavour off yours?"

"A trifle sweetish it is," Mrs. Corry admitted.

"Och, but he was the conthrairy man," Mrs. Rourke sighed, and continued wistfully to eye Mrs. Corry's bottle. Then she laid down her own on the bank beside her, and folded up her hands in her shawl as if repudiating it. "An ugly brash," she repeated bitterly.

"I'd swap wid you, ma'am, and welcome," said Mrs.

Corry, "only, you see, mine's a good bit smaller. This size wouldn't last any while if you was dividin' it among three or four."

"An' sure I wouldn't be takin' and deprivin' you of it, ma'am," Mrs. Rourke said, with politeness. Yet she added, "If that was all, I could aisy be lenthenin' it wid a drop of buttermilk or whey. 'Twould be wholesomer that way be-like. But I wouldn't take it off you."

"Och, it's no compliment, ma'am," said Mrs. Corry; "I'd as lief have the other, every atom. It's some stuff agin the rheumatiz I was wantin', and accordin' to me own experience nothin' you git makes any great differ. I'm just after finishin' the heel of a bottle Dr. Moloney gave the master the time he was bad wid the influenzy; he left it behind him when they went to Tubbermaglen. So here's this, Mrs. Rourke, and I'll give the other a trial. It's a pity to be annoyin' the childer wid ugly tastes before they've got sinse or raison."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," Mrs. Rourke said, with a brightened countenance.

The change in the young Rourkes' treatment having thus been decided upon, her neighbours were at leisure to bestow some attention upon Judy MacSheehan, and they expressed due concern when told about the distressful state of her family. Mrs. Rourke anticipated the worst, and justified her forebodings by a story of a girl her aunt used to know, who had buried three brothers and a sister in the one week, besides losing a fine young heifer. But Mrs. Corry took a more cheerful view, which she based upon the case of her master, Mr. Hanmer, who hadn't been able to hold up his head at all only the week before last, and now was after flourishing himself off to Tubbermaglen along with the brother-in-law, as fit as a fiddler. Jerry Sweeny remarked in comment upon this, that it wasn't any very gay sort of fiddlin' they'd be apt to get out of Mr. Hanmer, if one might form an opinion from his way of mooning about on the roads, which seemed the most he had to do. And Winny Corry craned forward to retort across three or four intervening neighbours that perhaps, of course Mr. Hanmer would be better employed oversettin' oil lamps, and burnin'

the bit of house round him, as if it was an ould wasp's nest, like some she could name ; the reference being to an episode remote in Jerry's past, but provided, as such things are, with threads of memory by which kind friends can at convenience twitch them back into the present. Jerry replied, "Oh, name away, ma'am," and sat watching her with a queerly crooked smile as she obviously prepared her answer. There was a quaintness in the belligerent attitude of the two, who were wizened little old people, with an unsubstantial whiteness about them, suggestive, rather misleadingly, of ashes cold over extinguished fires. But before Mrs. Corry had found the words, which in a life of much solitude had grown slow and unready, round the left-hand corner of the bank came a creaking of wheels. They were a massive and ill-matched pair, and rolled unevenly under a narrow dark green cart of simple structure, being just a lidless box. It was drawn by a small, hoary-headed donkey, and in it sat a large, stout, elderly man, of ruddy complexion, wearing a voluminous black oilskin coat, and a dreadnought hat. Several people simultaneously addressed him as "Kit," inquiring how himself had been this great while, and all expected to hear something new, for he was Christopher Breen, whose fish cart made the rounds of a wide district, and seemed to collect gossip at a rate directly proportionate to the leisureliness of its progress. To-day, however, "Cruel bad wid a could on me lungs," he reported, and confirmed it with a resounding cough. "Laid on the broad of me back for the last fortnight, and no one to attend me medically but Dr. Moloney's deputyty, that's an ignorant young man, to tell the truth of him ; offerin' to listen at me chest through some ould conthrivance of a choobe, and me wid a cough you could ha' heard from here to Dublin Bay. 'Bedad now,' says I to him, 'if that's not loud enough for you widout takin' of a choobe to it,' says I, 'it's too hard of hearing you are, in my humble judgment, to make much hand of the doctherin' business.'"

"He's gave no great satisfaction in the distric', to my belief," said Mrs. Rourke. "You might talk till you were tired, but he'd give you a bottle accordin' to his own notions and not yours, at the end of it."

"Well, the docther himself'll be home again next week," said Kit. "I'm just after callin' up there, and herself bid me be bringin' up a red gurnet on Tuesday. Dr. Moloney's always plisint, and a great man for aiten' red gurnet. Mrs. Moloney's a nice lady, too; but she's not a good judge of fish, I'll say that of her, after all the years she's buyin' them. I couldn't sell her a boiled lobster for a live one, but most other things she's got very little opinion about whatever."

"Isn't she somethin' to the gentleman livin' below in Daly's Cottage—him that's away now wid the docther?" inquired a Mrs. Fottrell, who, being deaf, came by only fragments of conversation, and had missed the Corry-Sweeny tiff.

"Sister she is, ma'am," Mrs. Corry said stiffly, "to Mr. Hanmer."

"And begor, it's the quare sort of fish *he'd* be apt to bespeak," said Kit, who did no business at Daly's Cottage. "I wouldn't suppose, now, he knew the differ between a turbot and a cod."

"Cod, how are you?" Jerry Sweeny said, and his sidelong eye upon Winny Corry was as the eye of a joyful magpie. "Bejabers, if he knows the differ between a horse and a cow it's as much as I'd give him credit for. Sure, as long as he's livin' now in the parish, I misdoubt he could tell you the name of e'er a body he meets on the road, when he's mopin' up and down it." Jerry paused here, expectant of a word from Mrs. Corry; but her lips appeared to be fastened with a very strong spring; so he proceeded, "*My* belief is that if a baste of the field opened its mouth and passed him the time of day over the fence, and he goin' by, he'd never take notice it wasn't a man or a woman."

Mrs. Corry now observed to Mrs. Rourke, "Well, to be sure, ma'am, a dale of people has a quare jabberin' out of them, the same as if they were somebody." And Mrs. Rourke, fingering her bottle, no longer bitter, duly said, "I wouldn't say there was any harm in Mr. Hanmer, a quiet, dacint, poor gentleman."

"Who was talkin' of harm?" said Jerry Sweeny. "He's welcome to streele about the place from this to doomsday, for anythin' I have agin it. There's plinty of things in the

world that there's bad raisons for, and others that there's good ones for ; but some there's none for at all—and that's the sort *he* is."

The subject did not greatly interest Kit Breen, so he started another. "Did you know young Mr. Considine was home agin? Well, I can tell you he is. For yisterday I was up at the House—the first time I resumed of me rounds—and comin' along the back avenue I seen Sir Herbert himself walkin' in the shrubbery, together wid Mr. Leslie, from Loughadea, that's their man of business. Quare and bad I thought Sir Herbert to be lookin', as ould as ould, and crawlin' along as if he was no better able to put one fut before the other than a crab a couple of days out of the wather. I axed them in the kitchen was there anythin' ailin' him, and they said there was not. But sartinly he had that apparence. So, a while afterwards, when we were creepin' up the long hill out of Kilsantry, somethin' come wid a surprisin' clatter agin the tailboard of the cart; begob, Fanny here gave a lep, nearly had me over on me head, and it takes a good deal to get a lep out of her. And what was it but Mr. Archer walkin' up behind us, and rappin' on us wid his stick. So he bid me be ashamed of meself for lettin' the little ass pull me up the hill, and, says I to him, if I was half a hundredweight lighter I might be apter to walk. And, says he to me, half a hundredweight was too light an excuse for drivin' and breakin' the baste's back. But, says I to him, it was a heavy excuse enough for not walkin' and breakin' me own, that's the back of a human bein'. And he took off wid himself laughin' hearty."

"Mr. Archer, now, is always agreeable," said Jerry Sweeny; "he has a word for everybody."

This sentiment Mrs. Corry heard with an expression of unutterable scorn, which Mrs. Rourke put into speech for her. "Talkin' 's aisy work," she said.

"Well, I must be jiggin' on," said Kit; "the rain's done till it begins agin, and we have to go all the way round by the back of the Sand Hills."

"It's a scandal to be bringin' her that far under a load," said Mrs. Fottrel; "why, the four feet of her's no bigger than the heads of so many matches."

"Sure, she paddles along on them right enough, if they was the size only of the head of a pin," Kit said complacently. "She's a strong crathur yet, for all she's turnin' so grey. But that I atthribute more to the throuble she takes considherin' things than any ould age there's on her. It's no such great while since I bought her at Loughadea Fair; and I wisht you'd seen the size of the chap was ridin' on her, he'd make two and a half of me. Musha, she's well able to go anywheres I want to take her. Och, and there's little Judy MacSheehan sittin' behind Mrs. Rourke; I didn't notice her before. And how's yourself, Judy?"

"I wouldn't wonder if Judy'd be glad of a lift as far as you're goin' Port Maguireways," said Mrs. Rourke, "for she's run over here after the docther, and 'twould bring her home quicker to her people that's took mortal bad."

"Why, to be sure, ma'am, I'll bring her widin' a stone's throw of them wid all the plisure in life," said Kit. "Jump in wid yourself, Judy."

"But it's distressin' the little ass I'd be," said Judy.

"Divil a distress! We've next to nothin' on board this minyit. Fanny'll only consait I've took in a mease of herrins," Kit averred. "Step in, machree; there's plinty of room beside the big creel."

As Judy was jolted along, the briny and fishy odours of old Kit's equipage may have recalled to her part of the conversation she had heard at the O'Loughlins'. At any rate, she did recollect what the strange man had said about the fishermen being turned out of Lanlone Creek, and she inquired of Kit with some anxiety whether he had heard or believed the statement. Kit knew there had been some talk of the people that were coming to Moygarna Lodge raising objections, and writing to the agent to put all the boats out of it. But he conjectured, with a double-chinned chuckle, that there might be a fairish deal of trouble first. They had been fishing in it as long as the seagulls, and you might be a good while biddin' *them* go off and drown theirselves in any place except wherever they could come by their bit of food most convenient. Judy did not find Kit Breen's view of the matter very reassuring. Her interest in it was closer than his, for her father, and Murty, and Pather passed much of their time

in an old boat, whose voyagings became often a subject of anxious speculations at home, even when they were limited to the comparative safety of the Creek. And though her years were far fewer, her experience of life had already enabled her to perceive the incompleteness of the parallel between sea-birds and fishermen, the latter being liable to so many more restrictions in the pursuit of their bit of food. The trouble that Kit could chuckle about loomed darkly before her, as she sat silently in the jogging cart, occupied with considerations as bootless, perhaps, as Fanny's own.

CHAPTER VII

IN the following days this Lanlone Creek fishery question was very generally discussed both at Kilcashel and Port Maguire, and all through the intervening countryside, which is a good step round by land, but no great distance to speak of across the sea-armlet running up between them. The village and the hamlet are set on a bit of coast whose free and fantastic outline is still a-making, slowly, as must be expected, since the material is rock and the tool is water. The work goes on steadily without a halcyon day's pause and with scarce appreciable acceleration in wild weather, when the high-leaping foam falls back in powdery spirts like marble-dust out of lofty crevices among the cliff-walled bays and sounds and creeks, that seem porticoes and halls and antechambers to some vast Palace of Ocean. Lanlone Creek, winding up past Kilcashel to the Owenbawn River, might be called a corridor, so narrow it is uniformly along its four or five miles pierced inland, until it comes near to where the low waterfall hangs white, like a spell-stopped breaker. There the channel widens out into what is known as the Broad Turning, and the cliffs crumble down into soft green-ledged slopes, which were anciently wooded. A remnant of the ruined forest's trees make a grove about the fishing-lodge. No sportsman could desire a more favourable site. For the productiveness of this Lanlone Creek is locally proverbial. Its salt waters are rowed in by all kinds of waving fins. Shoals of mackerel and herrings visit it, travelling under a treacherous canopy of rippled silver shingles, and when the evening shadows brood on it darkly, the salmon's leap up out of it in a flashing bent bow is like the sudden unspringing of the crescent moon above the black edge of a storm-driven cloud.

But the chief importance of the Creek, from the point of view entertained by the fishers who did not occupy the Lodge, lay in the fact that this sheltered nook is a comparatively safe fishing-ground, even at times when all the open sea has been put in such a roar as the most foolhardy craft dare not think to face. The owners of more or less unseaworthy curraghs and pookawns could scarcely overestimate the benefits it conferred upon them by reducing the frequency of the occasions when they had to choose between imminent risks of starving and drowning. "Too little to ait or too much to drink," was the epigrammatic form in which their dilemma would commonly be stated, and Terence Mulcahy, a humorist of Kilcashel, used to say that "if it wasn't for th'ould Creek, a good few more of the lads would be very apt to ait their bit of fish could, wid a sauce of salt wather and sayweed, in dirty weather."

It was noways surprising, however, if the views held upon this point by the owners of merely the pookawns and curraghs should differ widely from those maintained by the owner of the Creek and all that swam therein; and the new tenant of Moygarna Lodge did naturally dislike the state of affairs, duly reported to him by his man, Stephen Hutton. To have paid a couple of hundred pounds rent for some miles of the Atlantic, and then to learn that the property (lacking a ring fence) was infested by fleets of poachers, sordidly greedy of gain and regardless of sport, could not but put a man out of conceit with his bargain, and make him desire prompt measures for the abolition of such abuses. Nor was redress of grievances far to seek. There were the laws of the land ready to erect an invisible yet effectual fence about his marine demesne, and safely reserve for him all its shining shoals. A touch merely was needed to set the machinery in motion. Accordingly Mr. Dawson did write what poor Cowper would have termed "a very unsavoury letter" to his water-and-landlord's agent, expressing surprise and displeasure at the discovery of the ill-preserved state into which the Lanlone fishery had been allowed to lapse, and which, had he become aware of it in time, would certainly have materially diminished the amount of his offer. The agent, not being in a position to indulge in unsavoury

correspondence on his part, seasoned his reply with suave promises of immediate investigation and reform. What Mr. Dawson complained of was simply a temporary result of the Lodge's long inoccupancy, and could be put a stop to at any time without difficulty. It was impossible that the sea-fishing could be damaged, the supply being practically inexhaustible; but vigorous measures would at once be taken, and Mr. Dawson might feel quite satisfied that it would in future be reserved strictly for himself.

Mr. Crampton, the agent, did not fail to set about the promised reformation, but the ease with which it could be carried out was somewhat less apparent than he had alleged. The truth, no doubt, is that nothing can be put a stop to at any time without some sort of heat-producing friction, a habit of fishing in smooth rather than in troubled waters not excepted; and such a habit had become sadly inveterate about Kilcashel. Time out of mind had the Lodge been empty, and to its proprietor, an invalid living at Bourne-mouth, the maintenance of water-bailiffs had never seemed a profitable investment. Similar opinions were held by the agent, who occasionally drove over from Loughadea on a car, and when returning always carried in the well a fine salmon or turbot, for which no money had been paid. On his latest visit, indeed, he had borne away into the bargain a grand pair of coral lobsters, which were pressed upon his acceptance eagerly by Long Pat MacSheehan, who uttered hopes, when making the presentation, that his Honour would reconsider what he was after sayin' in relation to the bit of trawling in the Creek; for with the mackerel about coming in, they would be at a terrible loss if anybody interfered with that. This tall MacSheehan had a long family, which made it as necessary for him to assume a conciliatory attitude towards his Honour, as it was expedient for his Honour to do the same towards his employer's new tenants. But their several interests seemed to be incompatible. Therefore Mr. Crampton, although he would personally have preferred to leave things as they were, could only repeat sternly, as he surveyed the uncomfortable crawling of the captive lobsters, whose welfare was certainly consulted by no one, that fair warning had been given, and

that those who disregarded it would have themselves to thank for the consequences. With this highly unsatisfactory response the felonious fisherman had to retire disappointed, and the report of it spread dismay through the ranks of his comrades.

Among his neighbours, however, there were some whose characters and circumstances urged or permitted them to protest in a different tone. Old Terence Mulcahy, with a sarcastic grin, which would not have misbecomed an ancient bard when reciting some foe-blighting satire, supposed that Mr. Crampton these times would have to be putting the sea through a strainer before he let e'er a sup of it into the Creek, for fear the new Quality might happen to find anything in it that they didn't fancy. And Christy McQuaide "up and tould him to his face" that it would take more than him and his prosecutions at Petty Sessions to keep the boats out of wherever they could get the best shelter. "And begorrah, sir," he added, "it seems to me you'll be takin' a dale upon yourselves if you turn the likes of *them* into the likes of *that*." Christy was standing with Mr. Crampton upon a grassy headland overlooking the beach, and he pointed, as he spoke, from a black line of little boats hauled up along it, to the white lines of the breakers, which were rolling in and in to fling themselves down with a sound as of explosive sledge-hammers. When he fell in with the agent, Christy was on his way from work in his semi-marine potato-patch off at Port Maguire to join a gathering of fisherfolk, whom he would be sure to find by the shore a little short of Kilcashel village, and see whether anything were doing in that line of business.

With the chagrin of his late disagreeable interview upon him, as he resumed his walk, Christy McQuaide seemed to wear all the additional gravity of the half-score years or so that had passed since the time when he had sought to console the last careful moments of his cousin Nicholas Conroy, and had made himself responsible for the welfare of Delia and Bernard. He had never regretted their coming, except just of the "odd while" when every circumstance in one's condition appears to invite adverse criticism. On the whole he could have said with truth that "he would liefer the

children were in it than not ; they livened things up a bit." And this notwithstanding that their presence in the household entailed some not inconsiderable sacrifices upon other members of it. Nor was either of them a very lively sort of child, a defect which, to be sure, had many counterbalancing qualities, entitling them both to a high character for quietness and goodness. Perhaps the most serious trouble they had ever caused by any refractory behaviour, was on the occasion of their old cockatoo's death, which occurred not long after their settlement in Port Maguire. They had buried the bird solemnly under the dyke in a corner of the potato-patch, which was all very harmless and unobjectionable. But next Sunday, Mrs. McQuaide and her sister-in-law, passing by on their long tramp to mass, were distressed to perceive that the place had been marked by the erection of a small wooden cross painted pink, "Just the moral," as Mrs. McQuaide declared with horror, "of the one there was over their poor father in the burying-ground at Kilcashel." Its immediate removal was decreed, even Alice McQuaide, whose opinions upon some points were laxer, agreeing with her that it was no thing to have there next door to the road, where everybody might see it going by. Then both the children had been so deeply aggrieved at the abolition of their monument, and Delia in particular had cried so inconsolably about it, that Christy urged his mother to let it be set up again, "at all events till the crathurs were out of their first consait wid it," and to this she had protestingly consented. Very strong, however, had been the sentiment of the two women that "it was a shame and a scandal to have the like set up over an outlandish ould fowl, evenin' him to a Christian"; and before another Sunday came round, the pink cross had somehow been done away with. So the end of it was that Christy built up a small cairn of shingle stones above the grave, and ornamented it with razor shells, arranged in a device of nondescript shape, which contented his foolish little cousins without wounding the feelings of his mother and aunt.

This was one of several occasions on which Christy's proceedings were thought to argue him rather excessively

ready to humour the children ; and he did undoubtedly give much consideration to their interests. As the years went by, indeed, he began to transfer his hopes and plans for the future from his own lot to theirs, with a thoroughness not at all common in one who is still in his third decade. He had even put up—literally into a cranny among the rafters—a few shillings in better seasons, with a view to getting together a little sum that might help to give Bernard something like the start his poor father had intended. The other McQuaides, though more self-concerned, were all kindly disposed towards the orphans ; and it was no lack of good-nature, or grudging of the best there was to be shared, that made them seem, as neighbours said, “somethin’ downlookin’ mostly, and not much talk out of them.” These peculiarities were variously attributed to “the great power of learnin’ they’d got, attendin’ regular at school” ; “a notion they had that nobody else was good enough for them to be spakin’ to, set them up” ; the unlikeliness of their living very long in this world ; and the fact that people come from strange places were apt to be quare and unfriendly. In spite of them, the party left at the McQuaides’ felt small and dull, now that Bernard had gone account-keeping to Glenore, and Delia was in service up at the Considines’. Changes in general were intrinsically disagreeable to Christy, and these were no exceptions. But still less to his liking, and more to his loss, was the recent conversion of his brother Ned into a water-bailiff. It had happened in the winter, soon after the departure of their young cousins, and Christy was often wondering “what at all had took the chap to go do such a thing.” The pay, of course, was pretty good, yet he hardly thought that likely to be the reason. He supposed Ned had got tired, and small blame to him, if that was all, of going on so long with the little bit of farming and fishing, and making next to nothing out of it. And in this connection Christy sometimes doubted regretfully whether he could not himself have managed to undertake more of the most tedious jobs, so that there might have been a better chance of Ned staying content. Perhaps seeing the two young ones going off had given him a sort of hankering after going somewhere too.

Christy had had some experience of such hankerings himself, but that did not explain to him how Ned could have been induced to take up so ill-reputed a calling. To be sure, he was employed away along the River Doure, looking after the salmon, a different thing from interfering with people who had to get their living out of the sea, or do without it. That was the view of the matter which he insisted upon to his neighbours when defending his brother's action ; still he felt that he was only putting the best face on a bad business, and his efforts did not seem to himself by any means successful.

Christy, as he went, was considering these things, which had assumed an uglier aspect since the menace of new fishing troubles had begun to spread, and they still perplexed his mind, when, having descended to the sea-level, he came round a turn into sight of the group he expected to meet just there. It was the bit of strand a little way up from the mouth of the Creek, where the cliffs have left room for a strip of shingle above high-water mark, with a short length of road skirting it to Kilcashel village, hidden behind a jut of crags oceanward. Close by is the entrance to the Herringbones, a shallow and shoaly channel, which communicates with the sea armlet washing the shingle spit of Port Maguire. It is the only byway out of the Creek, though in the high rock walls there are several deep recesses, all of them mere watery blind alleys leading no whither. The Herringbones strait is filled with rocks and reefs and bars, to which, people say, it owes its name, because there are more of them than anybody wants. Its passage, except at the top of the tide, is intricate and difficult, but would often be made as a sheltered short cut to the Creek. At the junction of Creek and Herringbones, the greater part of the Kilcashel and Port Maguire fishing fleets had their berths ; the station being convenient, whether work was to go on within, or, more venturesomely, out beyond Inish Duff.

On this grey March evening they were lying high and dry, many of them queerly curved, long-shaped canvas structures, which, being turned bottom upwards, looked like colossal black slugs crawling forth from oozy lairs among the sea-

weedy boulders behind them. A few of the wooden boats were four-oared, but such a size was exceptional, and none of the craft, smaller or greater, had an aspect calculated to inspire confidence in any special emergencies of storm and stress. They had been now weather-bound for some days by the blowing in of a fierce western gale, which stirred even the Creek into impracticable fury, from the salt surf at its mouth up to the turbulent place where its waters met and swirled down the creamy foam of the swift Owenbawn River. Only yesterday the two Egans, father and son, had been nearly swamped in putting off to try and row themselves as far as the Broad Turning, a vain attempt, the rashness of which led their acquaintances to pronounce them "the quare headstrong divils that might ha' known better than to go play any such a fool's trick when they seen the Gavreen Rocks there lost in a white smother with every flurry of a wave that went by, and when the Broad Turnin' itself was apt to be as wild as the Ould Lad's thrashin'-flure." To which Dan Egan had rejoined absurdly enough that "a houseful of hungry childer was as wild in its own way as most things, and he'd as lief be anywheres out of it." This evening the wind had fallen, and the placable Creek showed few traces of past commotion, save in the thickness of the white fleeces on its edges, and the long, straight bands of their froth like fine cambric frilling, that striped the slowly heaving olive-green. But out to seaward sharp, snowy crests were still leaping against a fiery horizon line, and in that direction John Morrissy looked as, by way of greeting to Christy McQuaide, he said, thumping the side of the boat on which he sat, "Well, Christy man, I was just a-sayin' it's thransportin' of this old crathur I'll be off of this strand."

Christy, nor any of the persons present, could mistake the bearings of the remark. It was indeed Morrissy's way of reintroducing a subject which for some days past had been constantly discussed by very much this same party of men and boys, mostly weather-beaten and wearing blue jerseys. And you might have noticed that whenever it came up in conversation the hum of voices at once sharpened and deepened, as does the hum going on inside the suspected hole in a mossy bank, after somebody has poked down a

stick. This phenomenon recurred now, the hum rising up round about Morrissy's boat, which occupied a central position in the group. On boulders and boats to right and left of him lounged ten or a dozen dwellers in Kilcashel and Port Maguire, and a few others had taken higher seats behind him on the low road-wall. John Morrissy was a man in the prime of life according to chronology, but gaunt and hollow-eyed enough to make it appear more than probable that all his best days had gone over his grizzled black head.

The statement being plainly designed to invite a question, Christy thought it manners to respond, "What at all for, then?" as he took a seat beside Bartholomew Kelly, a man of un conjecturable years, with high brick-red cheek bones and small bright blue eyes, twinkling under a tawnily-flaxen thatch.

"Ructions!" replied Morrissy.

"Be raison of them new regulations Crampton's after startin' on us," Kelly added. "But faix now, *my* ould boat'll lie aisy where she is for a long while yet before I disturb her on account of him."

Here many of the company uttered sentiments about Mr. Crampton generally in the form of aspirations. One of the best adapted for quotation was Mick Donoghue's wish for "the chance to be showin' the bliggard a sight of his ugly gob in one of them deep pools. He wouldn't want to be throublin' e'er another lookin'-glass after that, himself and his foxy goat's beard."

"But ructions there'll be," Morrissy said, returning from visions to realities, "for he's about settin' the bailiffs and the polis on us dirictly. I'd misgivin's in me own mind we'd be apt to be put out of it once I heard tell of Quality comin' to the Lodge. And sure it stands to raison, inside here's the place for them that goes fishin' for divarsion; they wouldn't be very ready to go look for it out there, and if they did, it's somethin' else they'd likely find. And maybe it's only fairity that them that gets their livin' wid the fishin' should have the best good chance of gettin' their deaths the same way into the bargain. It's the gentry's opinion, anyhow."

"For the matter of ructions," Bartholomew Kelly said, "I've never set fut in a place, wet or dry, where they wouldn't

be risin' as plinty as sandhoppers in the sun on the shore. But, accordin' to me own exparience, the sorts that you run into out on the ragin' say bates all the rest. So I'll chance the others, wid the help of God. At any rate, there'll be throuble in it wid some of us, if I'm not mistook, before they've dhruv us out of this to get our dhrowndin' deaths, like a flock of crows huroosha'd out of a field."

"Whoo, hould your gab, Johnny," said a young man, craning forward a face, flat and freckled, from behind the screen of a tall boulder. "You'd a right to lave that sort of talk now Christy McQuaide's in it, considherin' the thrade his family's took up wid." And the face grinned with taunting significance over at Christy, who looked abashed and vexed. "If it's Ned anybody's aimin' at," he said, "his turnin' bailiff was no doin' of mine, supposin' there's much harm in what he's about. And at all evints there's nothin' to hinder me of talkin', or anybody else of talkin' whatever way they plaze. It's not an over-sinsible way some people has a fancy for, that's all I can say."

"Indeed now, 'twould be a fool's notion to consait that a man and his brother was the one thing," said a voice from a little above John Morrissy, where Owen Kinsella was swinging his long legs on the flat-topped road-wall. He was a handsome, rather melancholy-looking youth, with a classically shaped black-cropped head, in a quaint little cap, which was classical too, or at least archaic. "Sure, your brother Joe's a dacint chap enough, for instance, Barney Cuddihy."

Through a rising laugh Barney retorted, "Och, to be sure, Christy McQuaide's tuck you for partner in the boat since Ned went off, and signs on it, you're as thick as thieves."

"That's the worth of the half of yous—there's bound to be some little schamin' raison of one's own at the bottom of everythin' one says or does, like a sediment of dirt in ditch-water, or you can't see any sinse in it," Owen said in a low, disgusted tone, as if soliloquising rather than replying. Then louder and more cheerfully, "Well, man, and if so, aren't the two of us fishin' together only twyste as sartin to be set agin the bailiffs, that you need blather about Ned?" To

which Barney replied with a grin become better humoured, "Och, bejabers, you had me there."

"What I was thinkin'," said John Morrissy, "was that if we just dhrew off out of this for a bit, while they have the notion of presarvin' the fishery stirred up in their minds, we might prisintly slip back again—like the crows, Kelly—and no more talk maybe about it. We're apt to be gettin' a spell of dacint, paiceable weather in it for a while, plase goodness, now we're done with them all-fired 'noctials; we might be fishin' outside to suit ourselves. And you couldn't tell but the mackerel mightn't look into the Creek at all at all this prisint time. I remimber three year ago there wasn't as many of them took in it, from one end of the saison to the other, as you'd put in a good-sized fryin'-pan. It was out to beyant Inish Maree we had to go after them."

"I mind, bedad do I," Bartholomew Kelly said. "That was when Tom Noonan, and the O'Donnells from Malee-shard lost their lives wid their ould boat stove in and sinkin' under them, in a heavy say."

"Sinkin' or swimmin'," Morrissy said, resentful of the inconvenient reminiscence, "it's bad work to get contendin' wid the polis, and all the divilment behind them. Destroyin' nets and lines and everythin' else on us they'll be, if there's nothin' worse. But there was a man shot dead over it last year down at Lough Carnfoyle, and sorra the satisfaction got for it either anyway, so far as I know."

"If anybody got shot this time," the elder Matt Egan remarked, "he might happen to not be a fisherman. Or someone might come by a crack over the head wid the butt end of an oar, and suppose by chance it was a bailiff—the devil's cure to him!—sure it couldn't be helped, and it wouldn't be too bad work at all."

"Murdherin's plenty bad enough, to my mind," said Morrissy.

"Murdher?" said Matt Egan. "Yourself's the quare man, and you wid a wife and childer, to be discoorsin' about murdher, when the only talk was of puttin' a stop to them that's doin' their best to hinder the crathurs of their bite and sup to keep the life in them. I'd as soon call it murdher to smother down the winds and waves of the say, and every-

thin' else that comes agin us to desthroy us. What 'ud you call that sort of killin', lad?" he said, turning to his right-hand neighbour, who was Christy McQuaide.

"If we got fightin' wid them," said Christy, "I wouldn't call anythin' that happint murder, unless it was done threacherous. But I'd liefer not have it on me conscience—to be takin' a man's life, and not knowin' what he's lavin' behind him, and he not the biggest villin among them at all, for naught'll happin *him*, you may depind. Some of the polis, now, is very dacint chaps whatever."

"Oh ay, bedad, and them water-bailiffs as well—on-common dacint," Barney Cuddihy observed, but, owing to a compromise between spleen and discretion, in a tone which did not penetrate beyond his niche among the boulders.

"They wouldn't throuble themselves to axe you what you called it, when they was walkin' us off to Rochestown Gaol," said John Morrissey, "and much good it 'ud do us then, even supposin' we'd put daylight through the half of them first."

"There'd be a dale of satisfaction and contintment in that same, all the while, the Lord knows," Bartholomew Kelly said reflectively; and the sense of the assembly seemed to be with him.

"Talkin' of gaols," struck in Cornelius Phelan, small, eager, self-assertive, and called by his acquaintances "the Piper," "in my solemn opinion it's we ourselves 'ud do right to have the law of *thim*, and thry have they any business to be disturbin' us, after all the len'th of time we've been in it. I know that's what the lads over at Shanvyle done a while ago about the fishin' there. Shillins' apiece they subscribed for to be payin' a solicitor would represint them before the Coort. And, bedad, if they got as big a rogue as Battersby, at Loughadea, he was chape at the money. That man 'ud take in Ould Nick three times out of twice. Very belike we could get Battersby."

"Wirra, wirra," said Kelly, "sure now, the very next time I have to be clearin' out me pockets of shillin's for want of spare room, I'll give you a one, and welcome, for your subscripshin to compliment ould Battersby. And I wouldn't wonder if we made all as much out of it as them *stookarns* at Shanvyle—every bit I wouldn't."

"You might wonder, or you might let it alone," said the Piper, ruffling up in defence of his flouted suggestion, "you'll find plinty more know-nothin's along wid you aither way. But it stands to raisin there's somethin' to be said for us, if we could get a hould of a knowedgable man. Don't tell me but fishermen has their rights."

"Och, to goodness, and is it to the Law and Coorts of Justice you'd go lookin' to find *thim*?" said Kelly. "Did you ever think, now, of takin' your ould net a streel yonder up over the furze-bushes on Slievemarnagh?"

"There's nothin' for the poor," remarked the Piper's cousin, Tony Phelan, a ragged little old man, possessed of a small stock of aphorisms, upon which he drew largely for conversational purposes.

"If you come to considher it, there's a sort of sinse in the Piper's foolery," said Bartholomew Kelly; "for it's a quare thing entirely if we haven't e'er a right to be anywhere's, wet or dhry, and that's the way it is wid us, there or thereabouts. The ould savin's and lavin's on the edges of the sayshore and the black bog, that's where we're to be farmin', if farmin' you call it, and when we're dhruv to take a turn at the fishin', troth, it's out wid us into the eye of the storms, and plintygood enough for ourselves and the saygulls."

"It is surprisin', now, how them few folks have grabbed a hould of everythin' else, rael surprisin'," John Morrissy said, not without a tinge of admiration in his tone, "the say in especial. Somethin' aisier it is to comprehend how they might have come by the land, or the rivers even, and loughs. But you'd think the say was an unhandy affair to git any sort of grip on, and, all the same, grabbed it they have—to the wisps of weed washin' up along the shore—that's their property, if you plase; and shillin's to pay for lave to be breakin' your heart luggin' it up to your bit of pitaties. Somewhiles I do be wondherin' in me mind by what manner of manes they contrived it all."

"I should suppose there was nothin' but a pack of dirty poltroons in the counthry those times, and that would be what gave them ones the chance to be grabbin'," was the opinion of Hughey Brien, a tall young man, who had been sitting silently on the road-wall near Owen Kinsella.

"And to ha' kep' it all this while? And to be keepin' it yet?" the Piper said with sarcasm. "If that's the way of it, you might as well be callin' the whole of us poltroons at once."

"Sure, then, I wouldn't say but what yourself's like enough to be lendin' them a hand that way, since you know so much about it," said Hughey Brien soothingly.

"Do I so, me man, do I?" said the Piper. And Brien dropped himself down from his wall-seat on to his feet on the shingle.

"The Piper's a great fool and a gabbin' jackass," John Morrissy remarked, with candour. "But there's no need to get talkin' about poltroons; for in our times it's not the same way at all. The mischief was ready done on us, however it happint, before we were born or thought of, and one man might hinder what ten hundred couldn't help comin' after. It's like a ladder slippin'. When it's about startin', you can stop it aisy wid your toe; but once it's slammed down wid a smash on your head, you might be bothered to set it up slantin' the right way agin."

"It was off a ladder me poor grandfather lost his life—thatchin' a rick up at Loughadea," said Dick Brennan. "Thirty fut he fell, and every bone in his body splintered to matches." Dick's talk was often marked by nobody; but now Tony Phelan said in philosophic comment—

"Head or fut is by luck;
In your time you'll be tuck";

and both of them were happily unconscious of having spoken beside the question.

Meanwhile Bartholomew Kelly said, "Well, Christy, and what are you intindin' to be doin'?"

The answer to this inquiry was awaited with general interest, partly because Christy McQuaide's opinion had considerable weight among his neighbours, and partly because his brother's worse than eccentric line of conduct seemed to make his own course less easy to forecast than it would otherwise have been. Christy, however, left no room for doubt as to his intentions. He said, "Why, just like yourself, I'm thinkin' to keep on the way I was before they riz any talk of purvintin' us. They might let the

matter drop, and supposin' they don't, 'twill be time enough, when they've done somethin' more, to considher what to be at wid them."

"Time enough," said John Morrissy, "and yous very belike landed again then in the divil can tell what sort of ruination."

"But if Crampton seen us bundlin' off wid ourselves that aisy frightened," Christy argued, "the mischief knows what plaguy ould tricks he might take it into his head he could be playin' us whenever he had a mind."

"And small blame to *him*, bedad," said Bartholomew Kelly. "It's them spoils our chances that'll be dispersuadin' other people from standin' up to the likes of him, not contint wid slinkin' out of it themselves."

A wrathful scowl bent upon him straightened the flight of this bitter shaft to John Morrissy, a rather pitiable mark, as he sat nervously plucking a trail of black withered seawrack into shreds with hands wasted and tremulous as well as worn and rough. Something of this was in his mind, as appeared in his reply, when he said deprecatingly, "It's noways wishful I am to be spoilin' any man's chances. That's not to be said agin me. And if I was gettin' me health as well as you do be, Barney Kelly, I might be ready enough too at that sort of talk; or if I had no more age on me than Christy there or Owen. But I've fished a dale since then, and maybe I won't be fishin' a great while longer. And now there's all the crathurs of childer at home. So what wid one thing and another, I do mostly be considherin' the paiceablest way of gettin' along. I'm tired contindin'."

"Ay, ay, that's the way it is," lame Peter Carr said, slipping into the place vacated by Christy, who had gone to sit beside Owen Kinsella on the wall. "Forby, as you was sayin', Morrissy, a while ago, it isn't as if the fishin' was all them ones has got a hold over us in; there's plinty of other ways they could come down on us, if they was annoyed. The sayweed, you said. I well remimber when me poor father was livin' up at Bundoyle, our landlord there had a dispute wid his tenants, and what does he do but he takes and rakes up every screed of the saywreck, accordin'

as it came washin' in along the foreshore. Men he had there, on purpose, mornin' and evenin' after the tides, to hinder a bit bein' got—not the full of a creel—and carted the whole of it off to his yard. The big hape was standin' there like a haystack bewitched for a couple of year, till the smell of it 'ud poison a parish. He'd no tillage to be usin' it for, mind you; 'twas just to annoy and ruin the little farmers. So where'd some of us be now, if they took to that sort of work along this shore?"

"There's a dale of things to be considhered, and that's a fact," said Morrissy. "Howane'er, if you're thinkin' too bad of me to be movin', Kelly, I'll lave the boat where she is for another while—there's the whole of it."

"And it's very right you'll be doin', John Morrissy, no fear," Kelly said, graciously accepting the concession.

Meanwhile Christy, having joined Owen Kinsella in his position slightly aloof from the rest of the party, fell into discourse upon more personal matters. Despite their respective twenty and thirty years, some deference to Owen's judgment might have been noticed upon Christy's part. For instance, there was a suggestion of apology in his tone when he said, "The next time I see Ned, I'll spake to him about that business he's took up wid, and tell him in my opinion he ought to give it over. Dacint polis there may be, and dacint bailiffs, but a man has no call to set himself down to be nothing better than one of the best of a bad lot, when he'd got the chance of belongin' to middlin' respectable people to begin wid. However, I don't believe meself that he'll be wishful to stick to it much longer. Just givin' it a trial he was for a sort of divarsion."

Owen had for some time past been sitting silent, and looking out to sea with an expression meditatively dissatisfied. He now nodded assent to what Christy said, but only half-heedingly at first. Then he collected his thoughts, and said, "Bedad, he's a right to be lavin' it. I wouldn't say there was much divarsion to be got out of any such thing."

"So I'll tell him," said Christy; "he might maybe have the notion he was keepin' some chap out of it that would give more throuble in it. But it's no thing to go do, anyway; it is not. He'll have to look out for somethin' better. Me

cousin Bernard, now, seems to be doin' finely at Glenore," Christy went on, turning away from bailiff Ned with alacrity, as if relieved to adduce a more reputable connection. "Keepin' some accounts he is for the business they have in it. I was over seein' him the other day. It's a wonderful place entirely."

"I've heard diff'rent people talkin' about it," said Owen. "Some day I must step along and see him."

"Me mother says when she remimbers it, 'twas no better than Port Maguire, only a thrifle bigger. I niver was there before; but a grand place it is these times. The little houses the people have is a sight to behold. Standin' separit they are mostly—there's only a very few of them in a row—and a little garden round aich, and it's bit of land handy near by. First-rate land, too. Ne'er a stony field I seen thereabouts. 'Twould do your heart good to be puttin' down a crop in it."

"The same sort that they have the sheep on here, I suppose," said Owen. "They're in luck to ha' got the chance of usin' it themselves."

"Bernard and some of the others was tellin' me," said Christy, "of the quare idees Sir Ben O'Neill and Mr. Kerri-gan, that the property belongs to, has about the land. Accordin' to what they say, they seem to think thim that would be workin' on it had a right to come before thim that would only be grazin' over it, so nobody there's put off wid ould bits of bog and shingle stones, where a sheep 'ud starve, if she wanted the wit to stray away out of them. Bedad, them that works on the land at Glenore, as good as owns it very nearly, you'd say. Bernard showed me where they do all be workin' somewhiles in the biggish fields by the Lough. The crops they grow are surprisin'; and horses and ploughs they have of their own, and mowin'-machines, and rapin'-machines, and all manner, that they joined all together and got themselves."

"Ay, to be sure—all together, that would be the way of it," said Owen.

"The thatch on them houses of theirs was as smooth and shinin' as the gould rim on a little jug," Christy averred, "and berry bushes and flower borders round about them."

I seen one wid a narrow little path goin' up to the door, all done in a pattern like of grey and white stones, most tasty. It 'ud be a pleasure, now, to be bringin' one's mother—or anybody—home into such a house. But there's a grand one Sir Ben's built them near the school, wid fine big rooms in it, where they do be havin' their meetin's, and singin' and dancin', and readin' the newspapers. 'Miss Merle's Cottage' they call it. There's nobody aquil to Sir Ben, all the people say; not but what Mr. Kerrigan's well liked too. Him I seen the day I went there; Sir Ben was away. Mr. Kerrigan come to the store to be givin' Bernard a message, and he said they was well satisfied wid him. And he was showin' me some plans that he's contrivin' for makin' a sort of ponds in places along the shore, for to be stockin' wid live fish took in the fine weather, the way there'd be the less call to go out after them in the bad. Axin' me he was what I thought of it, and I thought it would be great. A sinsible man he seems to be. I wish we had the likes of him here."

Christy paused; but as Owen, continuing to gaze in rather moody abstraction seaward, made no comment, he resumed, "Well, we must put up wid what we haven't got, as the cow said when they tethered her on the pier-end; and I suppose we'll be takin' th'ould boat up yonder wid the mornin' tide to-morra. 'Twill be rough enough outside yet. None of the lads are intindin' to quit the Creek; and they're doin' right."

"Troth are they, as long as they stick to it," Owen said. "But how long that'll be would bother anybody to say. They've never a notion of keepin' steady to the one plan. Every now and agin two or three of thim'll be droppin' off wid another, just as it suits themselves. Thinkin' I was that maybe this affair about the fishin' might turn out a good chance of stirrin' them up to make a stand that 'ud show them what they could do if they plased. But I doubt there's any use tryin' it. I was listenin' to them here a while ago, before you come, and 'twould disgust anybody to hear them talkin'. Divil a sowl among them has the sinse to consider aught that's a stone's-throw out of his own way, any more than if he was livin' all his life in the middle of a fog

on a little Inish the size you'd cover wid a dryin' net, and consaited his boat, and his brats, and his ould shanty were the only ones in the world. And it's 'the one thing and the other' with the whole of them; when it stands to raison that if you're to git aught done at all, 'the one thing' is what you must be mindin', and let the mischief take 'the other.' Such a set of bosthoons I never seen."

"That's scarce so very surprisin' in itself," Christy observed, "for I should suppose they're about all the people ever you seen, good or bad."

This obvious fact seemed as little consolatory to Owen as it is rather commonly the nature of obvious facts to be. "It's the black look-out, then, for everybody, if that's the way wid them all," he said; "for how are they to git an understandin' into them? You might as well talk to the saygulls and bid them quit screechin' and fightin'." Gloom deepened on his face for a few moments; then his countenance suddenly cleared. "But I don't believe it," he said; "there's other sorts. If I haven't seen them, I've heard tell of them. And these same ones in it here might be as diff'rent themselves as day and night, if only the right man got at them and the right raison. Maybe it isn't in this fishin' affair after all. But some of these days it'll come, and then we'll all get together, and have a great chance."

Owen Kinsella's share of the world's wealth, and indeed his desire for it, could scarcely have been smaller. Yet he had possessions lying behind a door, which unbarred itself to him fitfully and suddenly at the pass-word of a mood. It now flew open upon regions filled with very golden light, into which he wandered blissfully away.

But his mere earthly surroundings were growing dimmer as the dusk fell; and the others began to think of going home. They would be making an early start to-morrow to catch the tide. Biddy O'Keefe had come down from the village "to see," as the neighbours said, "after her two ould men," who were her father and his father. Swinging himself along after her with the gait of a disabled grasshopper, followed Paddy Cuddihy, strayed over from Port Maguire. He peered about when he came within sight of the groups on the beach, and perceiving no enemy present,

made his way down to the water's edge, where he seated himself on a ledge of black rock. Several voices called, "Well, Biddy, how's yourself? Here's the two of them for you right enough." And Bartholomew Kelly added, "Sittin' there behind the big stone, like a couple of crickets behind a sod of peat."

"Sure don't I see the pair of them?" Biddy said. "I'd ha' come before, only I couldn't get finished sooner wid settin' the pitaties, for I was afraid of me life they'd ha' gone out wid the tide turnin' and the ould boat as treacherous as a thrap. Nothin' 'ud suit them better. Not that me father's so bad; it's me grandfather won't bide aisy himself, or let other people. He's a terrible stirrin' man."

"It's the rheumatics keeps your poor father paiceable," the Piper remarked as she passed him. "They're as good as a tetherin' rope on an ould ass."

Her grandfather eyed her with dissatisfaction, because he knew well that her influence always went towards repressing the activity on his son Mick's part, which he himself was constantly recommending as the best cure for all infirmities. To his own habit of "goin' on the wather, wet or dry, stormy or still," he attributed the "souplesness," which he retained at the age of "ninety or next door to it." He now said, with a sour look when he saw her approach, "Och murther, here's *that one* comin' stumpin' along." However, he admitted that they might as well be stepping: and though he added, "There's some I could name mighty fond of busybody-thanklessin'," she was so contented with his compliance that she did not trouble herself about its ungracious manner.

As he spoke, the waft of a breeze passed by, blowing in from the westward, where far out beyond the Creek's mouth there was a ghostly white tossing, just to be seen dimly on the rim of the great water, that widened away to the ashes and embers of the sunset. And after the breeze a strange sort of stir came up the Creek and along the strand. It could scarcely have been called sound or motion, yet it suggested both. No ripple broke on the margin, but the water's whole surface seemed to be swelling and rustling under the misty grey dusk, and a shiver ran along the edges.

“There’s somethin’ come in lookin’ for us,” Paddy Cuddihy said from where he sat crouched on the black rock, dipping one bare foot in a pool. “Somethin’ out of the deep say. It’s feelin’ around for us, in among the stones. Some day it’ll be apt to find us.”

“The tide’s turned,” said Bartholomew Kelly, “and the wind’s rufflin’ up a bit outside.”

Paddy Cuddihy was not supposed by anybody to be all there. Still, just at that moment his explanation sounded at least as plausible as Bartholomew Kelly’s. And as the group broke up voices might be heard dispersedly repeating, “‘Somethin’ come in lookin’ for us,’ says he.”

BOOK III
OF PURCHASES

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CHAPTER I

PEARL-WHITE hawthorn buds were swelling in the fresh green bushes about Kilcashel, when one early April morning an efflorescence of large pinkish handbills appeared on its walls, gates, and other convenient surfaces. They announced the sale of the lands of Kiltavera, Goultrasheen, Breachanstown, with half a dozen more names long and difficult, which, however, clearly conveyed to all the neighbourhood that Sir Herbert Considine "was about sellin' every bit of his property." The fact had naturally very various degrees of significance for different people. The centre of acutest interest was up at Shanabawn House, the rambling old mansion with wings and a turret, standing high in a nest of trees. Out of them the turret rose with a somewhat stately effect, diminished on a nearer view, as it became apparent that the screen of leaves was held up by crooked and spindly, or otherwise unmarketable stems, interspersed with the stumps of many goodlier trunks laid low in days when the necessities of the Considines had raged among them like a storm-blast discriminatingly destructive. This same ill wind was still blowing strongly about the house, though it could no longer bring any fine timber crashing down. Within doors were the persons most concerned. Most deeply, Sir Herbert. To him this business seemed simply one sort of ruin narrowly, and no doubt temporarily, averted by another. It meant the uprooting of himself from all that was familiarly tolerable in his decadent life ; the sweeping away of every security that had enabled him to forecast a fairly well-left

future for his wife and daughter ; the resurrection, so to speak, vicariously and retributively, of his own early follies ; the loss of home and habits, dignity and peace. Since the thing had been settled he had spent most of his days staring into the library fire, and Joe Barry, who put turf on it from time to time, reported that the master looked like an old man of a hundred and fifty, and would never hold up his head again in this world.

Griselda, the daughter of the house, came nearest to him in affliction ; hers differing from his, however, as does the unhappiness of twenty from that of sixty. She had a larger room for the reception of visitant troubles, and the length of time during which she might be called upon to entertain them seemed to her quite indefinite. But, on the other hand, a complete exodus of their whole company was not included in her rather brief list of impossibilities. Her father's aged aspect and shattered spirits were what aggrieved her soreliest, making her wrathful against fate ; for the more immediate author of this catastrophe was a person who had never risen into the plane of responsibility. Sir Herbert's prophecies of beggary and other doleful things affected her less, partly because she had always been accustomed to hear such predictions. The proposed flitting from Shanabawn to Dublin pierced her with poignant regrets, yet their keenness could not but be tempered by speculations about scenes so new and strange, and so far more stirring than those amongst which the hours of her long days were sometimes found tardy in passage and barren in retrospect.

Lady Considine's distress was much more materially alleviated by the prospect of their move, for she had never reconciled herself to the remoteness of Kilcashel. She brought all the wide range of mountain-tossed land and beleaguering ocean under the term of "a hole," and hence deplored only the manner of creeping out. Her chief interests in life were her son and her piano ; and now, though Archer's affairs were extremely grievous to her, she could not forbear the reflection that up in Dublin her instrument would be more easily kept in endurable tune. And it was, of course, a comfort to know that the poor boy could not possibly be to blame.

As for Archer himself, he whose reckless gambling, with resultant debts of honour, had wrought this urgent necessity for the raising of thousands by desperate expedients, his frame of mind was, comparatively speaking, unperturbed. His tranquillity was promoted by a vague and erroneous belief that his own fortunes were somehow ensured through entails and marriage settlements. On the whole he inclined to the opinion that his spirited conduct, though it had not indeed been crowned with the good luck it deserved, was really the means of conferring a benefit upon his family, by stirring them up, and shaking them out of the old grooves in which they had stuck too long. He had no doubt that the changes would all be greatly to their advantage. When, however, he found his people pigheadedly unprepared to adopt this view of the case, and consequently disposed to be dull and inappreciative, he lost little time in "borrowing" from his mother a few pounds, because she had not many, and departing on an indefinite visit to his friends at Moygarna Lodge.

Among the Shanabawn servants more or less dismay prevailed, although only rumours of the family's removal had, as yet, reached them. At dinner-time in the servants' hall, old Nanny Landy, nurse of two generations, avowed a scornful disbelief in any reports about a breaking up of the establishment. She said it was a likely story, and she hoped they'd all keep their eyes in their fools' heads until they saw the Considines quitting out of Shanabawn. But perhaps her professions exceeded her belief. At any rate, it might have been noticed that when she had climbed up to her own haunts in the little oval-shaped sewing-room, she presently hobbled irately over to the window, where hung a shrill singing canary, and covered his cage with a blue-checked duster. "You little anatomy," she said to him vindictively, "I'll trouble you to whist wid your high screeches, when there's some kind of bad work in the house, and Master Archer's foolishness at the bottom of it, I'll be bound—the poor child." Then she became aware of Delia Conroy, writing a letter with the wide window-seat for a desk, and commanded her to "put away that ould scrawlin', and be gettin' out the sheets to turn," which was a way of darkening *her* cage.

In the village the handbills were much commented upon, generally to the effect that Sir Herbert must be nearly stone-broke, and that Mr. Archer was terrible wild. This frequently led to the conclusion that it was a pity to see an old, ancient family coming down in the world. But here and there one of the elder generation would be heard remembering that old Sir Archer had been mighty ready to put people out of their little places, and it wasn't much he minded where they went to—into their graves very belike, or else they maybe wouldn't be so sorry at all to see how the Considines couldn't keep the land themselves, at the heel of the hunt. A few people, who derived "odd jobs" and other benefits from Shanabawn House, felt a more selfish, personal concern about the embarrassments of its inmates, and considered themselves menaced with harder times. "Otherwise," as Mick Ryan said, "it made as little differ to them who else owned the land, as it did to the bastes of the field, or maybe less. Nobody'd be likely to pay rint for to let *them* get their bit off it; that was sartin'."

One might have expected that the news would be received with at least equal indifference by Lord Fintragh up at Barnaglen Castle. There was indeed no such love or liking on his part for his neighbours and distant connections, the Considines, as would give bitterness either to the spectacle of their misfortunes, or the probability of their absence. He had often called Sir Herbert "a weak-knee'd fool" in speaking of him to an acquaintance so far socially inferior as Dr. Moloney, a thing which argued great exasperation and contempt. It would therefore have seemed rational to conjecture that with respect to this unworthy person, the fewer his possessions, and the further his abode, the better would Lord Fintragh be pleased. Nevertheless one would have conjectured wrongly. The announcement of the impending sale was a very unwelcome piece of intelligence to the lord of Barnaglen Castle, a mansion which, from the thither bank of the Owenbawn River, confronted, across the valley, part of the lands in question. Barnaglen was a much larger place than Shanabawn, and its superior size had apparently given it scope for more extensive dilapidation and decay, while everywhere traces were visible show-

ing that penuriousness as well as poverty had been at work to bring them about. In the midst of its disfigured park and pleasance, where trees had fallen, and weeds had flourished high, among dismantled galleries and saloons, with their mouldering decorations and spider-hung tapestries, were the still inhabited apartments, wherein Lord Fintragh was usually to be found, buzzing like the querulous captive of a dusty web. His talk flowed constantly in one unflagging stream of complaint, fed from many springs. This main current swelled with ire against the monstrous state of society under which it became increasingly impracticable to keep up an establishment with imposing parsimony, and most disastrously possible to cripple one's resources in the belief that he has selected a really good thing from among the jostling fleet of speculations. But therewith mingled lamentations over the cowardly supineness which restrained those at the head of affairs from enforcing sundry heroic remedies for the cure of these outrageous ills. "A little shooting, sir, that's what we want," was a phrase sure to recur in this connection—and vaticinations revealing the abysses upon whose brink the country tottered, with its population of cads, ruffians, thieves, fools, brutes, and faddists.

Commanding such a copious supply of grievances, Lord Fintragh had no need to replenish it from his neighbours' private stores, and there was not any obvious reason why he should take Sir Herbert's difficulties to heart. Yet he apparently did so; in fact, the gloomy countenance which he turned upon the cutlets and cold beef at luncheon on that showery April afternoon caused his daughter Leila to forebode some unhappy crisis in their own affairs. She was not long home from the sojourn with her married sisters, during which she had been enlightened about her father's financial misfortunes, and although she strongly suspected that Mabel's account had been purposely exaggerated, it had set her nervously on the look-out for signs and tokens. So she felt relieved when it appeared that this present shadow was thrown by a quite alien disaster. Since she had made up her mind that Archer Considine was utterly impossible, the departure of his family from her neighbourhood would

be rather convenient than otherwise, and certainly gave her no grounds for more than the most conventional regret. Her indifference about the matter was betrayed too plainly to please Lord Fintragh in her reply to the announcement by which at length towards the end of luncheon he had seen fit to account for the moroseness of his demeanour. "This is a very delightful state of things," he had said; "exceedingly so. That infernal ass at Shanabawn has gone smash at last—debts of that young *vaurien* of a son, I fancy—and now here's the whole place plastered over with notices of the sale of his land: the house and all, I believe; and the whole pack are off to Dublin."

"Well," Leila had said, "I shouldn't think they'd be any great loss to us. The only one of them I liked a bit was Griselda Considine; she isn't a bad sort of a girl. Perhaps some nice people might take Shanabawn."

"You singular idiot!" said Lord Fintragh; "'not any great loss' indeed! And who the devil do you suppose was talking about losing *them*? By George, Herbie Considine and Lady Pound-Piano"—Miss Roche's talent for witty nicknaming was inherited—"are heartily welcome to betake themselves to Jerusalem, and stay there, as far as I'm concerned, if that was all. But perhaps you'd think it no loss either, when some brute of a meddling, philanthropic faddist buys the property, and sets the same sort of foolery on foot here that's destroyed Glenore. You're simply talking mischievous nonsense about what you're incapable of understanding. It's quite on the cards that that pair of ruffians, O'Neill and Kerrigan, may see fit to purchase, and favour us with an extension of their bedlam swindling schemes. How'd you like to have a settlement of their precious peasant proprietors' ornamental pigstyes—residences for the new country gentry—planted over there, sticking up their filthy chimneys in front of our windows? I believe it's hardly more than a quarter of a mile, as the crow flies, across the river. But, by the Lord, if there's any probability of those two fellows becoming the purchasers, I'll take legal steps against them. It's past belief that such a monstrous thing can't be put a stop to before it spreads like leprosy over the whole country. This house would be

no longer habitable by civilised people. I should consider myself to have been turned out on the roadside ; in fact, I should at once move bag and baggage to the Abbey, and so I shall tell Sir Herbert *sans phrase*." Lord Fintragh had often been considerably surprised at the casual manner in which statements of his hypothetical intentions were received ; but he none the less continued to announce them with due solemnity. His daughter now merely reflected that Emlisk Abbey was perhaps a shade less deadly than the Castle, an opinion which she prudently kept to herself.

She had not, however, long to wait for an opportunity of marking her displeasure at his rudeness and tedious tirade ; for soon afterwards he proposed driving over to interview Sir Herbert at Shanabawn, and requested her to join the expedition. But she demurred, alleging fear of rain, so that as he really desired her company, being proud of his pretty daughter in public, meanly though he rated her mental capacity, he had to be conciliatory and persuasive for some time before she consented to believe that the showers might keep off, and went to get ready. When the moment for starting arrived, she half regretted that she had not persisted in her refusal. The appearance neither of her companion nor of her equipage was calculated to inspire pride, and fresh from the spick-and-span correctness of Mabel's Ginglestead Manor and Ethel's Dyne Court she surveyed everything with a critical eye. Fidgeting in the hall, Lord Fintragh was a small, unkempt figure, in a short brown great-coat, from beneath which the skirts of a longer black garment appeared fitfully, like the wings of a beetle under its dividing shards when it is about to take flight. Waiting at the door, the battered old carriage stood grotesque, with its hood by misadventure fixed permanently half open and shut. Dinny Meleady, the coachman, as he climbed to his towering yellow box, with the help of dangling rope-loops, supplemented by shoves from the onlookers, matched his carriage and horses very fairly well. Leila was chagrined to observe that he had given a finishing touch to his curious livery by ornamenting his hat with an extraordinary cockade, presumably of his own construction. She could have wished that he had attended instead to the

humbler task of removing the earth which adhered about the shaggy feet of their ponderous roan, but she acknowledged that the gaunt decrepitude of their ancient grey would have baffled the utmost assiduities on Dinny's part. Then as she noticed the frequent occurrence of string in the animals' harness, she reflected that more spirited steeds might have been found less appropriate. All these things made her think of a millionaire's carriage into which she seemed to have foregone her chance of stepping.

They had not proceeded far in this state when they overtook a tallish, youngish man, who was walking meditatively along with so little regard to the narrowness of Roche's Lane that yells from Dinny only just prevented a collision. Lord Fintragh reared up and craned out an indignant countenance to identify this obstructor of the traffic, and remarked, as he always did upon such occasions, that people seemed to have a most singular predilection for parading under his horses' feet. "It was the fellow who lives in Daly's Cottage, I believe," he said, sinking back when they had passed, "that brother-in-law, or whatever he is, of Moloney's. He's more presentable-looking than one would have expected from that connection. I declare now," Lord Fintragh averred, letting drop an imprescient eyeglass, "you might say that he looked tolerably decent; and he appears to be harmless and inoffensive."

"Some people say he's cracked," said Miss Roche; "perhaps that's why he wants to get his bones broken."

Ulick Hanmer, not much more aware of his narrow escape from being run over by the Barnaglen carriage than he was of its occupants' criticisms and witticisms, continued to walk on abstractedly. A matter of real importance was occupying his mind. That morning's post had brought him news of the rare kind which is like an opening of some door into wider and pleasanter spaces than have hitherto been accessible. This is as a rule, nowadays at least, done by means of a golden key; and so it was here. The implement had been put into his hands by a communication from a firm of solicitors, informing him that so many thousands of pounds had accrued to him under the will of a client lately deceased. There was really nothing startling in the circumstances of

his enrichment. He had always understood that if two or three moderately improbable things happened, he might succeed to this unknown great-uncle's property. They had happened, and consequently here was his fortune. Most people, indeed, would have thought the prospect worth the expenditure of much speculation, accompanied by many hopes and fears ; and they would have kept themselves well posted up as to the thriving of their chances. But Hammer's turn of mind had led him to adopt the simpler course of forgetting all about the matter, and his fortune came to him in the embellishing guise of the unexpected.

Not that it was by any means a magnificent fortune, though much larger than anybody except the thrifty old testator had surmised. It would have barely sufficed for one quarter-day of some multi-millionaires. About forty-five thousand pounds was the sum placed at his disposal, a fact of which Messrs. Hancock and Warden had much pleasure in apprising him. But its new owner, roughly calculating that it would more than quadruple his present income, saw himself raised to a position of affluence which, so far as wealth went, left him nothing to desire. With fifteen hundred a year he had the whole world to wander in, to whatever extent he would ; and just at that time his wish was to wander long and widely. A roving-craving had come upon him urgently, as it often comes upon those who are made lonely by character as much as by circumstances, and it had been with him through a lagging spell of wintry weather. Since his return from his visit to Tubbermaglen it had seemed to grow stronger as he resumed the daily routine, with a sharp-edged sense of how refreshing would be an escape therefrom, unhampered by the clog of burdensome companionship, which had made much of his late excursion a weariness. Only yesterday that had been the subject of his meditations as he tramped along this same bit of bog-skirting road, through a wan sunshine, which ever and anon shimmered into a silvery dulness on the trailing mists of a shower. And he had almost resolved that, no longer deterred by what was perhaps as much inertness as prudence, he would straightway accomplish a migration southward, without waiting for the accumula-

tion of funds which should enable him to go further and fare better. But to-day had suddenly converted him into the possessor of resources ampler than he had ever dreamed of acquiring, and had thereby removed the sole obstacle that had blocked his path. He might be off to-morrow, or at any rate as soon as he could pack up; and his eagerness refused to contemplate any delay beyond that. It was years since he had felt so keen about anything. Probably because he was now for the first time permitting himself to realise fully the irksomeness of conditions which he had regarded as more or less inevitable, and which should forthwith be very thoroughly changed. He would have no more of this monotony, accentuated by a rhythm of bootless, petty alterations, a constant twitching at the folds of habit in which it was his instinct to envelope himself; the shrinking and stretching of daylight; the need or superfluity of a fire; the varying noises on the road and in the fields as cattle or pig market days, crow-scaring or hay-making seasons, came round, should cease to thrust themselves upon his notice. Curiously soothing was the anticipation of no more hearing his old housekeeper remark: "The days are gettin' fine and long now, sir; you won't be wantin' the lamp till after the dinner," or suggest hopefully: "It's lovely and warm this mornin', sir; will I be lightin' the fire in the sittin'-room?" He had no dislike at all to poor Mrs. Corry herself; but somehow he often hated the sight of her, and the sound of her voice. And he was not looking forward to merely negative advantages such as these. Reminiscences of the southern lands and seas and skies, which he had beheld in brief glimpses long ago, came back to him alluringly, and he was quite prepared to appreciate the palms and temples, the snowy peaks and pines.

It was one of the immunities enjoyed by him as an empty-handed traveller, that he had no reluctant leave-takings to go through, nor any cherished occupation to lay grudgingly aside. Perhaps he did experience a most faint twinge of regret, as he reviewed his bookshelves and made a rough selection of travelling companions. But, of course, he could easily take his chief favourites with him, and if he were settled down permanently anywhere could as easily cause all

those old familiar faces to rejoin him. As for the faces of human beings, he had learned that familiarity alone is a doubtfully attractive quality, and he knew of none in Kilcassel endowed with any other. His half-hearted hope of finding some in his sister's household had been proved futile ere the end of his first hour beneath her roof. Certainly, to extract anything of interest from Gertrude and her family would have required some sentiment about them stronger than that which exhausted itself in a vague apprehension that he ought not *quite* always to have a cold when they invited him to dinner. His nearest approach to regret was when the reflection occurred that he would see no more of those two people from Glenore with whom he had fallen in at Tubbernaglen. He had liked them both, and they had seldom bored him, notwithstanding that their conversation often turned upon topics which he should have expected himself to find most difficult listening. However, he reflected again that though they might be all very well to meet just in such a casual way at a time of enforced dissipation, they might have appeared in quite a different light if they had followed him into his own fastnesses. So if O'Neill had actually come to see him, as he talked of doing, when brought by business next month to Kilcassel, the visit would very likely have been a failure and a nuisance. Regrets of this degree needed little consolation.

With the current of his unwontedly agreeable thoughts not at all diverted by that small adventure in Roche's Lane, Hanmer walked on until he reached the Moloneys' yard door, where he stopped for a minute, because two figures, receding round the corner ahead of him, appeared to be his sister and brother-in-law, homeward bound, and he would fain allow them time to turn in at their own gate safely before he passed. While he waited he glanced carelessly at various placards, with which the bill-sticker, in spite of prohibitions, had covered the temptingly broad expanse of boards. His eye was caught by a fresh-looking pink notice, on which he read the advertisement of Sir Herbert Considine's lands. "Perhaps they're going away too," he said to himself as he walked warily on again. "I suppose now I could become a land-owner myself on a moderate scale if I liked. But goodness

forfend ; the last thing I've any wish for is to be spacious in the possession of dirt."

Hanmer's precautions were ineffectual, for his relatives had prolonged their walk beyond their own gate, and he encountered them when they turned back. Naturally he mentioned that he had learned the contents of old General Delaney's will, but about the plans which he was forming in consequence he said nothing, hurrying away from apprehended offers of hospitality on the plea of letters to write. The news was to the Moloneys also of deep interest, though necessarily of the indefinitely forward-looking sort, upon which there is no immediate action to be taken except verbal comment. This they set about with promptitude and energy, and Hanmer's accession of wealth was under discussion at any time during the remainder of that day at Prospect View House.

"He'll not stay on in that little glory hole of his now, I should think," Dr. Moloney said, reverting to the subject after tea.

"Well, do you know, I shouldn't wonder a bit if he did," said Mrs. Moloney ; "I don't believe it will make any great difference to Ulick in reality. He never seems to care a pin about having things like other people."

"He's a queer specimen, that brother of yours," said Dr. Moloney ; "I never ran up against anything particularly like him before. If he's got more notions of enjoying life than an old horse moping along a lane, he manages to conceal the fact uncommonly cleverly. He's too clever company for the likes of me, I suppose. Now *I'd* know well enough what to be at with a fortune, if one came in my way ; but the sort it's no mortal use to are the people the money comes to, and sticks to, like the flies on an ant-eater's tongue. Faith, that's a more serviceable article than his one. I never met a man with less notion of keeping up a conversation ; he's always letting his end down with a dump." His recent experiences in his brother-in-law's society had moved him to think poorly of Hanmer's capabilities as a practical man of the world, and a few absent-minded inadvertencies on Hanmer's part had left in the doctor's memory a little feeling of pique, which this eddy of circumstances brought to the

surface. "In my opinion," he added, "he's not overburdened with common sense."

"All those Irish Delaneys were very queer, I believe," Mrs. Moloney said. "His mother's people, you know. I remember hearing that there was an old great-aunt, who used to wear her bonnet in bed."

"He'll hardly live up to his income down there at Daly's Cottage, with old Winny Corry cooking his mutton chops," said Dr. Moloney. "He must have been saving a good bit even before this."

"Oh, he won't spend anything like half of it, you may be sure," said Mrs. Moloney. "Why, he can't have less than about two thousand a year."

"Two in my eye!" said Dr. Moloney. "Bless my bones! if he invested with an atom of gumption, he could get double that as easily as gathering it off the hedges."

"Four thousand!" said Mrs. Moloney. "How delicious—if one had it, or even what he won't use. My goodness, just think how his savings would mount up at the rate of a couple of thousand a year! He'll end a regular millionaire."

"Well, all the better for us," said Dr. Moloney. "You say he's got no other belongings. And there isn't much fear of his getting married, as long as he sticks in that little hole, at any rate."

"Look at the age he is, though," Mrs. Moloney said, contemplating a possibility quite other than marriage. "What great difference is it likely to make to us, after all?"

"A great difference likely enough to *them*," Dr. Moloney said, indicating several of his children, who were present, ostentatiously absorbed in their books; "besides, you never can tell what may happen; the best life in Ireland may go out tomorrow like a wet match. Their uncle may leave every penny of it among them, and that makes a very considerable difference, even supposing he doesn't put his hand into his pocket to help me with the education of that pack of boys. I must say, in my opinion, it's what your brother might very well do."

"I daresay he would too, if he thought of it," Mrs. Moloney said. "I've asked him now and then for things for some of the poor people, and he never made any objection nor seemed to mind a bit. I don't believe it's that he's stingy."

"It would be easy to give him a hint, if that was all," said Dr. Moloney. "I wonder what his money is in. Consols, very likely, or some such old woman's stocking-foot. I must see whether he can be advised to put it into some good thing—not too risky. I should fancy he's just the sort of fellow who'd be glad to have that sort of business taken off his hands."

Mrs. Moloney said, "Of course it would make all the difference in the world to have the children provided for in that way." And she presently turned the conversation to the apparently heterogeneous subject of the stair carpets' disgracefully shabby state. Still it was her eldest son, Kenneth, the brilliant raconteur, who most promptly turned to account this sudden brightening in the family's prospects. Kenneth was, much against his will, about to enter the office of Mr. Battersby, the solicitor at Loughadea. But he now felt his position to be so substantially improved by the probable nature of his uncle Ulick's last will and testament, that on the strength of it he formed a resolve, duly accomplished on the morrow, to abandon his morning's study of law, and go coursing with Darby Carr, a person whose society he had been strictly forbidden to frequent.

Thus we have seen that this April day, with its fitful tossing about of sunbeams and shadows and clear-flashing drops, was the date of at least two events of some significance at Kilcashel. When its last fiery gleam had been forgotten in the skies, and the fallen rays seemed to have been gathered up and set glimmering here and there through little window-panes and darkly-opened doorways, the minds of several persons were still busily occupied with the new thoughts it had provided for them. In his shadowy-cornered, small study, Ulick Hanmer, with a map spread out before him in a circle of lamp-light, was making a preliminary survey of the realms that were to be unlocked for him by his golden key. They comprised no such strangely radiant regions, wonderful and wild, as those to which Owen Kinsella, for instance, had access, and among which he was at that same moment roving, as he sat out under the lee of a surf-beaten crag, with the wide night above him, and the tide lapping in at his feet from other vast,

lonely spaces, shrunk only by that supreme vastness and liveness. Yet Hanmer's acquisitions did not lack a very gracious glamour. He saw in moving pictures, vivid and delicate, as if he were putting together a magical dissected map with bits of flower-bright enamel, many a southern landscape, where light was light, and shadow shadow, glowing gold and white, pansy-purple and blue. Sometimes the shadows were thrown by columns whose marble was stained as if with the steeping sunshine of the long centuries, and all the rare little town lay basking among emerald and ebony vineyards, and silver-grey olive woods, and lamp-fruited orange groves, beside a jewel of sea, that was only roughlier cut, perhaps, than the sapphire curved over it. Sometimes they brooded in a mountain forest glen, that was hung on a quivering crystal thread, as it climbed up along by the down-darting torrent, to emerge on wide steeps, flushed with a wildfire of windflowers, and crowned with the shining of high-caught snow. These pictures shifted at will, which was part of their charm, and showed him very various scenes. But among them never appeared—and this was more of their charm—anything like the forlorn street of Kilcassel, with its mud-frescoed cabins, and whitewashed chapel, and doleful burial-ground, looked into by police-barracks and public-house, and garish with gaudily painted crosses, leaning awry, half hidden amid shaggy nettles and docks. Nor was their atmosphere ever filled with a chilly, colourless drizzling, and pervaded at set times by the sound of a bell jangling, the hoarse orisons of a neighbouring cock, shouts at beasts being driven past on the road, shrieks that betokened the breaking up of school, and other such dreary noises. And conspicuously absent was the figure of old Mrs. Corry, in her black cap and patchy apron, coming in to say, "Och, sir, the fire's gone out on you. Will I be bringin' you the lamp? The evenin's is gettin' fine and long now, glory be to God!"

The actual Mrs. Corry, meanwhile, was telling her beads in the kitchen, anxious of mood. For some species of instinct caused her to divine that the master was meditating an important change; and what more likely than that it might take him away out of the place altogether? And

then what great chance would there be of an old body like her getting e'er another situation? Long enough she might be looking for one. And if her cousin Ellen Brennan, who was all she had left now in this world that was anything to her, couldn't contrive to take her in—and indeed the poor woman had enough to do with half a dozen of little children—what remained except the Union away at Loughadea? She could find no cheering answer to such questions, and therefore went to rest with a heavy heart.

Up at Prospect View House, however, bedtime saw elated spirits still prevailing. Nothing occurred to compete in interest with their newly rich relation's affairs. Dr. Moloney had estimated his brother-in-law's probable income at something well over five thousand, and Kenneth had settled in his own mind that his uncle Ulick would presently proclaim him his heir, and make him an allowance on which he could keep a hunter, before they slept. A report that the police had seized a quantity of nets up in the Creek was received with indifference this evening, though in ordinary circumstances it would have created some pleasant excitement. And as for the advertised sale of Sir Herbert Considine's land, that was almost disregarded, naturally enough, being clearly no concern of theirs.

At Shanabawn House, on the contrary, the shadow of it fell pervasively, and pursued some of the inmates into their dreams. Its gloom was deepest where Sir Herbert sat by the faded library fire, which went to wreck symbolically before his unseeing eyes. The posting up of those handbills represented for him a further step along a very hateful road, on which he yet could by no means wish to remain stationary. For only a sale effected in time to meet Archer's debt could avert a kind of disgrace not hitherto included among the misfortunes of the Considines. His man of business, it is true, assured him that there was practically no reason to apprehend the non-appearance of a prompt purchaser; still, the interval looked so short, and the abyss beyond it so black, that he could not easily withdraw a fascinated gaze. An abundant choice of other sinister objects, however, lay before him. Most obviously, the severance from his old home and haunts. Now that he must leave them, he was surprised to discover how much remorse mingled with his feel-

ing about the poor people for whom he seemed to have done so little, and whom he had in some measure hindered himself from helping. Yet he said to himself, not without truth, that his father's and grandfather's harsh dealings with them, which he impotently disapproved, had been the first cause of his turning for distraction to those unprofitable pursuits afar from the scene of evictions and their sorrows, until upon his recall thither, he had come with all resources so crippled and diminished as to make the letting of things alone appear the only course in his power. That his son had chosen to put them in a worse plight was the sorry end of visions, which he had long ago cherished, about leaving Shanabawn to a successor, whose energy and good-will would enable him to undo some of the evil wrought by his forefathers. The futility of entrusting posterity with such commissions was a moral which Sir Herbert might well have been drawing as he cowered by the hearth, unconsciously stooping closer over it, as its warmth died away. But, in fact, he had not much in his mind save a general vague sense of despondency ; and at last, when a feeling of cold added itself obtrusively to this, he quitted his dreary watch by the crumbling sods and dragged himself wearily upstairs in quest of a few hours' forgetfulness.

All the fearing and hoping and dreaming of Kilcashel went on that night under the wing of one wide cloud, which rested smoothly dispread, with no wind ruffling about to shake down its raindrops or to waft it away. Nevertheless the weatherwise of the place had safely prophesied the approach of a storm, and, in fact, some thousand miles out to sea a terrific turmoil was just then raging. It swept about such awful billows, rearing such heights and cleaving such portentous chasms, that several monstrous dwellers below the seething surface—huge, many-limbed, livid-white, like the creations of a Triton's evil dream—sunk their leprous bulk of carcase and knotted tentacles down to lower depths, no doubt entertaining the conviction that good people are scarce quite as strongly as more personable shapes may do. This commotion was certainly drifting eastward, and if it held on its course Kilcashel must look to see the waters in a roar. But some stormy caprice might still alter its goal.

CHAPTER II

NEARLY a week later, Ulick Hanmer took an afternoon walk. It was the first day that allured to out-of-door exercise, the interim having been filled with storms of rain and wind, swelling into one of the most frantic gales of a violent season. Even now the sky scowled and threatened, and all along the bogland road, on which he started, running water gurgled and chimed unintermittently. It gave every channel a hurrying voice, and, wherever its passage met with any straitening obstruction, left wonderful fleeces of whitest foam under the black banks. Half-way across the bog, Hanmer fell in with one Miler Joyce, who was contemplating the snowy mass accumulated at the turbulent mouth of a culvert, and who, pointing to it, remarked, "Mightn't you consait yon was an ould ewe lyin' drowned on her back there? Be the same token, sir, I hear tell a good few sheep was swep' away last night in the floods down the Owenbawn River, and Jimmy Wogan, of Ballysax, below there, has a fine young heifer lost on him wid the risin' up of it suddint, and she driven safe into his haggard. Bedad, now, it's the quare counthry for drowndin' a man's stock on dry land."

The wind, however, had dropped, and the bog showed no traces of its career. These were to be seen when the circuitous route Hanmer had taken brought him back again towards the shore. It had still a most unquiet neighbour. Far out at sea something ever and anon, here and there, seemed to show white teeth in a grin that gleamed fiercely across the wide, leaden-green floor. Nearer at hand the whole line of the coast, craggy foreland and dark-walled recess, might have been imagined besieged by a maniacal horde of shrouded ghosts, perpetually flinging themselves,

with frenzied rushes and leaps, against barriers they could not scale. Hanmer turned off the road into a path skirting the beach, on a high level, yet subject to abrupt aspersions of spray. It was the margin, on his left hand, of many small fields, trenched and furrowed, and often dotted with little dark heaps of seaweed, each one the full of a toilsomely lugged-up creel. A sharp, rough, briny odour of decaying wrack hung on the air all the way, and the air itself had a clammy chill. The combination impressed Hanmer as being singularly disagreeable, and it no doubt helped to put a keener edge on his sense of the manifold change for the better in his surroundings that his imminent migration would bring. Matters of business, by his ignorance unforeseen, hindered him from carrying out his plans quite so expeditiously as he had intended, but the delay would be only brief, and had given him an opportunity for adding further pleasant details to his anticipations.

Some of them were in his mind at the moment when he rounded a jutting crag which had hidden a view down over the entrance to Lanlone Creek. Here there was more wildness of white surf than he had yet come upon. Two little inishes guard the mouth of the Creek, and help to preserve the peace of its waters—Inish Duff, low and reef-like, and Inish Skelane, whose tall, black cliffs, surmounted by a fold of sward, stand up like an ebony stool with a green velvet cushion. But in rough weather the channels that divide them from each other, and from the mainland, are often filled with more furious surges than any in the wide-weltering spaces they open on. "Seas sound not save in opposing straits," and here the enclosure that forbade their headlong hurtle forward into Lanlone Creek would be striven against fiercely and loudly. So it was now. Hanmer looked down over fairly quiet water, where the Creek first felt the shelter of confronting headlands, out to a smothering white swirl round about the two inishes. It was fitfully in shine and shadow, controlled by the long, scudding rays flung from low in an amber-rifted west to gleam and vanish again among broad webs of foam, with smoothly spinning circles of mist fear-somely interwoven. The plunging thunder of the breakers rose sullen and steady.

But round this corner Hanmer also came upon a small crowd of the people—men, women, and children—gathered on a narrow strip of grass that lay between the path and the edge of the cliff. They were all staring seaward. A stone's-throw distant, where a swarded ledge ran out further a little, four or five women were clustered at the extreme end of the sharp-pointed spit. They were making signals to seaward, and shrilly calling what seemed to be directions, but the sound of waves and wind broke their voices into disconnected shrieks. Hanmer stood still, and an elderly fisherman, treating the halt as an inquiry, explained to him, "It's Dan O'Keefe's ould boat we're watchin', sir; but I question will anybody be watchin' her much longer. Look where she is, and the tide settin' itself agin her." Hanmer did look, and saw what made the wild water wilder. About half-way across from the opposite side of the Creek's mouth, and close to the entrance of the channel between the islets, was a row-boat with six people on board. They were quite near enough to be counted, and sharp eyes could distinguish the two older men from three young ones and a boy. Four of them were pulling, but the boat seemed merely to toss up and down without making any progress. She was not in very rough water, being under the lee of Inish Duff. "They've broke an oar, that's what ails them," Hanmer's informant continued; "if it wasn't only for that they might ha' done it likely enough. Not but what the ould boat's as unhandy as a gob of mud. And small blame for the oar to break. It's ould ages since I seen Dan splicin' a one of them, and I tould him he had a right to be gettin' a new set—worn rotten they were."

"If they had a strong man, itself, at the fourth oar they might have a chance yet, wid the help of God," said another fisherman. "But wid poor Danny that can scarce pull his own weight—what bewitched him at all to be goin' out this day?"

"They're very poor entirely these times, I know that," said a woman in a fawn-coloured shawl. "Biddy O'Keefe was tellin' me yesterday they'd scarce a bit of anythin' to be givin' th'ould grandfather, that's took bad in his chest. Belike 'twas the only thing Dan could do. And he'd be hard set to get the lads to come along wid him, for a good

few of them's workin' in the fields to-day, and some of them's gone out in their own boats, and none of them has any love or likin' for that one of his."

"And small blame to them or her, aither," said the first fisherman, seemingly disposed to acquit things in general.

"He'd ha' done better, at all events," said the other, "to ha' gone along wid the rest of them round towards Fintragh Bay. I wouldn't say 'twould ha' been any sort of thing for the likes of him to go do, but there'd ha' been more raison in it than for him to be takin' upon himself to steele off over yonder, and he well knowin' what he'd have to contind wid comin' back."

"It's dirty enough, Fintragh ways, let me tell you," said the first. "I was up by the town this mornin' early, and the Bay at that time was like hell in a flurry of snow."

"I never look to see a sight of e'er a one out of the whole of them boats ever comin' home agin any more," declared a little old crone, stooped on a thick stick, which the distended folds of her great black cloak caused to suggest a tent-pole. "Lost and drowned every single sowl of them'll be, the two grandsons and all." Her next neighbour, who was gauntly tall, protested strongly, "Och, to goodness, keep yourself quiet, Mrs. Mulcahy; and don't be talkin' foolish that tormentin' way. Lave the drowndin' of the crathurs to their Maker. Himself's not the great fool" —she referred to her husband—"that 'ud bring Patsy and Jack any place where there was no better chances. Sure he's a sensible man. They'll be comin' home this evenin' right enough; what 'ud ail them to not? A very careful man he always was, bedad."

"Careful or no, Mrs. Hoban," remarked a hoarse voice, which came from betwixt the high collars of a strangely tattered cotamore, and the broad brim of an infinitely battered caubeen, "if there was a penny ounce of wit rowlin' about among the pack of them, they'd ha' seen that there shouldn't ha' been a stroke rowed by man or mortal outside of the Creek this day — nor to-morra. Do you expec' the say to smoothen itself down while you would be sayin' *whisht*, same as if it was a puddle you was after stirrin' up wid a stick?"

"The Creek, bedad," both the fishermen began at once, and the second continued, "and who's to be rowin' sthrokes in it these times, wid the bailiffs and peelers watchin' us there like so many cormorants fishin' off a rock, and be hanged to the whole of them? What happint the Egans' new net? Oh, begorra, we'd a right to let the Creek alone, and nobody be droppin' e'er a line in it, not if it was that thick wid the macker'l you could stand an oar up straight among them."

"'Twas that frightened the O'Keefes out of it, I know," said their neighbour in the fawn-coloured shawl. "Biddy herself was tellin' me the last she seen of her father he was lookin' up along the smooth wather, sorrowful like, and sayin' he'd give nine ninepennies to be turnin' that way—and there's where he is now, poor man, goodness may pity them all."

"It's where I wish to the Lord them was themselves that put him out there—ay, do I so—and a hobsate by the Ould Lad's hearth for them on the other side of it—the hounds!" the elder fisherman said, with a sudden ferocious vehemence, which was rebuked pipingly by the little old woman in the cloak. "Aisy now, wid your cursin', Pather Noonan; there's his Riverence standin' in the full blast of it, and he listenin' to every bad word, you may depind. Sure the long hearin' he has is terrible; yours and me own joined together twyste over wouldn't raich the one half as far. And it's no lie I'm tellin of your Riverence?" Her question quavered shrilly, but his Reverence, who was also little and old, only shook his white head without taking his eyes off the boat, thus leaving it doubtful whether the gesture disclaimed such exceptional acuteness of sense, or expressed disapproval of Pather's aspirations.

The black boat, tossing in the shadow of a low, iron-grey cliff, still maintained the same position, somewhat aloof from the turmoil of the more open water between her and the mainland, where the foam flashed sharply in the flitting sunbeams. Every now and then a great white pinion might be seen to swing up from behind Inish Duff, and shatter itself into mist high over the rocks, betokening fiercer seas beyond. She was watched intently, and for the most part in

silence, by a group which grew larger minute by minute, as people came clambering up cliff-tracks, or running together from the fields. The reason of their excitement was not yet quite clear to Hanmer. "What's so much amiss with the boat?" he said to the fisherman Noonan. "They don't look as if they were in any great danger where they are."

"Plinty there is amiss, sir," said Noonan, "if you knew the nathur of the place they're in. Caught between the two currents they are, you see—yon that's runnin' out like a mill-race through the inishes, and that other that's as bad at the land end of Inish Duff; and crippled they are by some manner of manes—a broken oar, I say—so as they can't make head agin it. I doubt could they if they'd a dozen oars; it's a terror of a current. They'd been thinkin' to weather Rossanlaw—there back of the three-cornered rock—the more fools they—and now, once the current grips a hould of them, it's in among *that* they'll be next minyit, where the life 'ud be bet out of a man-of-war."

The blanched fury, hurling itself about in the passage to which he pointed, was indeed a very eloquent prophecy of doom. "And isn't it possible to give them any assistance?" said Hanmer.

"Sure some of the boys raced off just now to thry could they get a boat to go lend them a hand—Owen Kinsella and Christy McQuaide I seen. But I'm thinkin' the sizeable ones are all out, and a little one 'ud niver raich to anywheres near them; nor an atom of good could she do them at all, supposin' she did, any more than the misfort'nit crathurs wavin' to them, and carryin' on foolish over there." These "crathurs" were the little knot of women who formed the extreme outpost of the gathering, having stationed themselves on the grassy-ledged promontory's furthest point, where two or three of them continuously gesticulated in the futile way upon which Noonan commented.

"It's poor Biddy O'Keefe, and the mother and sister of Jimmy and Hughey Lawder—the two that's rowin' on this side—and poor Mrs. Clancy—it's ould Mick and their little gossoon of a grandson that's sittin' in the stern—and the Donnelly's daughter, herself that young Johnny Heron, pullin' there along wid Dan O'Keefe, was spakin' to this

while back," said gaunt Mrs. Hoban deprecatingly. "'Twas Alec McGarry went bawlin' the news to Biddy where she was in the field, contint enough, threnchin' the pitaties wid the rest of them. And a pity it was, now, to be bringin' her here, where there's sorra a hand's turn for her to do but go demented."

"Well, anyway, one would suppose," said the hoarse-voiced, ragged man, "that she'd have the wit to know there was no sort of use in screechin' and beckonin'. Sure if she could be whirlin' the arms of her round her head like the sails of a windmill, till they took and dropped off into the say, who'd git any benefit? What the men want is somethin' to give them a heft out of where they are, and that's more than anybody can do for them."

"Ah sure, small blame to them after all, stuck up here, no better than images wid seein' eyes in their heads, if it's distracted they are in their minds," said Pather Noonan.

During the few minutes occupied by these colloquies there had been a slow general movement going on—forward and downward over the ledged and sloping sward. But now two or three people suddenly stopped short, as if they saw some crisis arriving; whereupon everybody else stood still, and all voices fell silent. The boat had slidden forward swiftly a couple of lengths, and there paused; her bows swung from side to side, waveringly and doubtfully, as if she were groping her way. Then slowly, but more steadily, she once again began to slide, settling into a faint, furrow-like streak on the dark water before her. One of the rowers stood up. One of the beckoning women dropped cowering on the grass. Then the old priest called, "On your knees, childer, on your knees, and cry to God and Mary for them." And immediately there rose up the confused, babbling, inarticulate murmur of many voices repeating the same words in various tones. If the sound could have reached to them, this cry to the Unseen in an unknown tongue might have rung appropriately in the ears of the lost boat's crew, who were drawn on, as though by the grip of some invisible hand, to their wreck, surmised rather than witnessed, in among the swaying ranges of the dark-ravined, sunny-crested billows.

An hour or so afterwards Hanmer got back to his own gate. He had run with a number of other men in all haste down to the strand, not that they could imagine their hurrying to be of any possible avail. There, unlike his neighbours, he found no cronies to entangle him in a talk, and thence he presently turned home through the last of the loitering spring sunset. On his way he met, near the burying-ground, his brother-in-law and Mr. Dawson, the tenant of the fishing lodge, who stated that they had heard of an accident, and were just stepping down to the beach to see what was going on. Had Hanmer been there? and was there anything to see? Mr. Dawson, a jovial, good-humoured-looking, youngish man, in capacious knickerbockers and Norfolk jacket, remarked, "Apparently the boat belonged to some of the people who had been helping themselves so obligingly to my fish. But," he added, with forbearance, "really it's a pity that these poor fellows are so reckless, especially as they make a point of leaving a liberal bequest of hungry widows and children to be provided for at the expense of their sorrowing country." Hanmer did not express any opinion upon the subject, and seemed to have no information for them, except that it was a "fine evening," which, with the drops of a passing shower in their faces, palpably lacked accuracy as well as interest. Walking on, Dr. Moloney apologised for the incommunicative hurry of his relative by describing him as "one of those cranky chaps who are always like a fish out of water unless they have their nose in a book." And to this he incidentally appended the facts that Hanmer was his wife's only brother, and a regular old bachelor, "with more money than he knew what to do with, and all that sort of thing."

Not far from home Hanmer overtook two women, and in passing overheard snatches of their conversation, the sound of their voices following him fitfully at the breeze's whim. One of them was saying that it would be a black night of sorrow for the crathurs, the Lord pity them, and she was just about steppin' across the bog to light a bit of fire at poor Mrs. Lawder's, the way they wouldn't come home to a could hearth in their desolation. Some reference to bringing

over half a bag of meal was almost blown away, and then the other voice said, "It's poor Biddy O'Keefe I'm thinkin' of as much as any of them. Dispr'it she is entirely. Just after lavin' her I am, down yonder at her own place, and now I'm runnin' home to the childer. But I couldn't tell you how many times the crathur was sayin' to me, 'And I not doin' a hand's turn for him, not a hand's turn to help him,' says she. So I would be sayin' to her, 'And how could you, honey, at all? Sure we might as well ha' heen watchin' them out of the moon and stars,' says I to her, 'along wid the saints and angels, as the way we were. Only God Himself,' says I to her, 'could ha' took them out of that alive, and the will of Him was to let it alone. And sure,' says I, 'Biddy, me child, many's the hand's turn you done for him while you had the chance, so it's wid the remimbrance of that you must be comfortin' your mind now,' says I."

"Och, but it's the quare remimbrance could be any great comfort whatever," the answer came, receding, "if the end of it all is seein' them swep' down under the smother of the waves. It's that you'll be remimberin'."

The two voices pursued him no further. By this time the sprinkle of rain had ceased and his cottage was in sight. Also, behind it, over the purple-brown hill-slope, the high top of Inish Skelane lifted up into a far-slanted sunbeam, which turned the tussocky grass into a faery golden green, beaded with the pearly white of fleeces tranquilly grazing. But the sea-sunken base, with all the surging war about it, was hidden. On the wall close to his gate appeared one of the pinkish handbills announcing the sale of Sir Herbert Considine's grass-lands. Hanmer read it through again, and then went indoors.

In the passage old Mrs. Corry, black-capped and grimy-aproned, met him, and said, "It's a nice evenin', sir. The days are gettin' fine and long. Will you be wantin' of the lamp before the dinner goin' in?" Hanmer thought there was light enough. And straightway he sat down and wrote a note which he posted before the going in of dinner. It was addressed to Sir Ben O'Neill.

At Glenore next morning its contents caused Ben O'Neill some little surprise. More than once in the course of their

domicile together at Tubbernaglen, he had expressed to Ulick Hanmer a wish that he would come and stay with them for a while, and he had always been rather amused at the ingenuous transparency of the excuses which Hanmer had then so very hurriedly erected to exclude a possibility of what he so very evidently regarded with horror. Though not at all good excuses, they at any rate succeeded, better perhaps than better could have done, in fully convincing Ben that he need expect to welcome no such guest. As the wish, however, had really existed, its unlooked-for fulfilment brought none of the dismay with which poetical justice occasionally rewards a somewhat gratuitous sort of insincerity. He learned with pleasure that Hanmer was actually coming to-morrow, if convenient. There had been, he reflected, something he liked about Hanmer, who, when he did not, out of laziness, make the first remark that seemed proper, had clearly more ideas than most people. Martin Kerrigan was pleased too. He considered this Mr. Hanmer to be a person of some quality and culture, and hence a suitable associate for Sir Ben, whom he had never ceased to regard as an exile from his own class and companions.

Through the persevering rain of the morrow's forenoon, Ben O'Neill drove over to fetch home his visitor from Loughadea, whither he had travelled by means of the local long-car. The damp being acquiesced in, it was a drive not without pleasantness. Many of its dozen miles ran in deep boreens, often between the boughs of tall hawthorn hedges in their freshest leaf, glowing bright as any blossoms, and hardly yet powdered with the rime of sealed buds. All the air was fragrant, with the odours of rain fallen on young green things, and peaty earth, to which were added here and there a waft of clear blue turf-smoke, or the breath of aromatic bog-plants, or the rich sweetness shed where golden furze bushes flared and blazed up against the grey. General impressions such as these were the kind least subject to the impediments of rain-mists and umbrellas; but towards the end of their journey Ben O'Neill began to point out more particular features. As the dogcart turned into a wider road, where two cottages almost faced each other, he said, "There, that to the right is the first we've come to on

our land. The other one belongs to Lord Fintragh." The two buildings might have been taken for a version of the full and the blasted ear, as both were of the same type, which one of them represented in a dwarfed, shrivelled plight, begrimed and mildewed. Its wholesome brother seemed to be constructed of the same materials. The thickness of the egg-white walls suggested mud; the sleek yellow of the deep-eaved thatch argued straw; the oblong box-shape, too, had the like simplicity. But the dimensions were what its occupants would probably have called "sizably" larger, and it was set up on a trim little grassy embankment or platform, round which ran a girdle of flowering primrose plants, and this again was encompassed by a plot of garden ground, with the greenery of berry and currant bushes, beneath the boughs of apple trees enamelled with flushed snow, and disclosing the glow of marigolds and daffodils—even the vivid sparks of scarlet geraniums in sheltered nooks. Whereas its neighbour over the way, shaggy with weeds and beslimed with damp weather-staining, was splashed up to the one peering mole's-eye window with mire of the road, from which a broken-edged step led down at the dark doorway. "Lord Fintragh, you know, says we are spreading like a plague over the country," Ben said, driving warily past a knot of ragged babies, who had made shift with a centrally situated puddle for their playground. "And certainly it is a fact that residences of this class have become rare hereabouts. You won't see another specimen on the way home."

The cottages they did pass were scrutinised by Hanmer with an interest rather surprising to his companion, who at first suspected "manners." Some were walled with mud and some with stone; a few slated roofs glistened purple in the rain, but thatch was much more common, whether in golden newness or mellow russet. Porches and gables and dormer windows diversified their plan occasionally, but in every instance the house stood raised on a little embankment, which was often finished off with a flower border, and adorned with devices of pebbles and shells. To Hanmer remarking upon this feature, Ben replied, "It's one of Kerrigan's notions. He says that in a damp climate like

ours it keeps half the sickness in the countryside from crawling in at the door. I think myself that's a slight exaggeration; however, there's some reason in it, and we've made it one of the three points we stipulate for when a new house is building—not less than four rooms for a family, a washable floor, which precludes an earthen one, you see, and an embankment at least a foot high. That's really an easy matter here, where stone and shingle and rubbishy stuff are abundant enough, goodness knows. Still, we had some bother about it at starting. The people said it was unnatural to be cocking themselves up on a stand like stacks in a haggart; and they said that they couldn't feel their feet studdy under them the same way as when they had a bit of the County Mayo for their flurin'; and they used to call Kerrigan 'Ould Live-be-inches,' because he unluckily stated his opinion that every inch out of the wet was as good as a year's life saved from rheumatism and influenza. However, they've quite come round now; in fact, at one time the difficulty was a sort of rivalry as to who should have the highest embankment. Look at that"—Ben O'Neill pointed to where, among a glare of furze-bloom, rose quite an imposing terraced mound, all its edge fantastically outlined in patterns of whitened stones, and crowned by a quaint little round cabin. "That belonged to a solitary little old man," he said, "who was left alone in the world. Designing and decorating it was the pride of his heart. But he died last year, and now it's occupied by an inartistic old woman, who groans woefully at all the steps she has to get up and down, and declares she might as well be living on the top of the pyramids of Agypt. But it's an extreme case. And here's the village."

It almost needed an announcement, for there was no village street, unless a couple of small semi-detached houses could be so considered. Both were shops, and one was the post office. A square white school-house was half hidden behind a fuchsia hedge close by, a grey church stood in a larch grove across the road; and further on, in a green field bordering on the dim-silver curves of the lough, stood a large, spacious-looking cottage, built of cut stone, but with a roof which showed wonderful wide expanses and long slopes of amber-brown thatch.

"There used to be two rows of cabins about here," said Ben O'Neill, after he had bought half a packet of foolscap at the store, the saleswoman observing apologetically that the lodger, young Conroy, was after taking the rest of it for some scrawming he had. "Miserable old hovels they were too, much the same as at Kilcashel, or rather worse—more on a par, I should say, with Port Maguire. It was a good job to get rid of them."

"Where have you moved them to?" Hanmer inquired.

"Why some of them you passed coming along, and more of them are over yonder about the far end of the Lough, where the big sheep-walk was. Of course it's much handier for a family to live on the bit of land they're farming. Besides that, Kerrigan discourages people living in rows; it's another of his notions, and I think he's right. He says that one sort of row is often the reason of the other, and means the joke quite seriously. It's not in human nature, he says, for people to live without quarrelling, when their children and chickens are all mixed up through other from morning to night. Of course it does save a little room, but, as he says, peace and quietness are well worth a few drills of potatoes and cabbages. That's what always occurs to me, when I see new cottages being huddled together in batches, as if the ground rent were ten guineas the square foot, with the width of the land spreading round them, and half of it very likely going to waste. At any rate, we find that the dispersion is a great advantage, and there are certainly fewer disputes, and people 'not spakin',' than in the old times."

"Wouldn't the general improvement in their circumstances account for that, apart from proximity?" said Hanmer. "Their tempers might well be short, goodness knows."

"That may have something to say to it, no doubt. Yet I'm not sure; one sees people whom one can scarcely imagine to have spirits or energy for contention," said Ben, "better off, they might be more likely to resent the squalling of their neighbour's babies, and the trespassing of their neighbour's hens. I don't believe that any of the people here would choose to have next door so near again."

But they're very sociable, all the same, and have great *ceilidhs* among themselves in the evenings, and various entertainments down at the Cottage. You'll come in for some of them."

This brought them to the gate of the Big House, with its wide lawns, where as yet only a faint mist of green had begun to gather about the elms and beeches. A herd of sleek-coated black Kerries grazing among them placidly, while a flitting cuckoo called silverly and wildly in the distance, seemed to Hanmer an epigrammatic little apologue presented for his consideration; but he felt that he had drawn the only possible moral beforehand. Kerrigan was waiting for them, in some concern at the weather, which he included among the responsibilities of a host. And, after luncheon, in a brown-walled room with a view of the sea again, unexpectedly close at hand, Hanmer explained to his friends the object of his visit to Glenore.

CHAPTER III

“WELL, I shouldn't wonder if it makes the fortune of the place,” Kerrigan said. “But hardly your own.”

“We haven't found ours such a bad investment, after all, even considered from that point of view,” said Ben O'Neill.

“And this really needn't be,” said Hanmer. “There's no question of fortune-making, as far as I'm concerned ; I'll be just where I was before—in every sense. A larger income would be no object, that I can see, if one stays on in Kilcashel, as I think I shall have to do.”

The tone of Hanmer's remark did not lessen the surprise which his hosts had felt as he unfolded his plans. This phrase, indeed, is scarcely an accurate description of his communication, as he had briefly informed them that he intended to buy Sir Herbert Considine's grass-lands and let the people have it in small holdings at low rents. During their short-lived intimacy at Tubbernaglen, Sir Ben and Kerrigan had seen enough of him, his tastes and incapacities, to make his voluntary development into a reforming landlord seem a very incongruous sort of phenomenon, and his manner of announcing its occurrence gave them no clue to the process by which it had come about. It struck them both that Hanmer spoke with a certain ruefulness, which would have been more appropriate to one reporting the adoption of some repugnant course thrust upon him by *force majeure* of circumstances, than to a free agent talking of matters evidently in his own control. If he had responded with any warmth to Kerrigan's anticipations of public benefits ensuing, these would naturally have been supposed his motive ; but his disclaimer of pecuniary aims for himself was accompanied by no expression of interest on

anybody else's behalf. And yet he had taken the trouble of coming to consult them, and apparently proposed some personal superintendence of the property. There was a rather perplexing inconsistency here. Ben O'Neill rapidly conjectured several reasons—natural incommunicativeness, irresolution, reluctance to pose as a philanthropist—without coming very near the mark. The fact was that Hanmer was going through a reaction from the mood in which he had formed, and already taken some steps towards carrying out, his resolve to make a bit more room on land. That result seemed to him the gist of his project, and for a night and a day after his last glimpse of Danny O'Keefe's boat wallowing down, benches under, into a mounded foam-drift, it had predominated in his thoughts. But now other results had begun to claim consideration, and although the mood had not utterly vanished, nor yet had been the sole basis of the resolve, his outlook changed cloudily. In his gloomy hour he could not bring any enthusiasm to the fulfilment of his task, nor even dissemble a marked listlessness and dejection. And this had befallen at the very time when it behoved him to make the most of his opportunities for acquiring information about the things with which he must in future concern himself. The more clearly he saw that obvious fact, the more perversely loth did he feel to enter upon the necessary explanations and inquiries. So it was perhaps lucky that Ben O'Neill's departure to preside at a meeting in the village presently obliged them to adjourn the discussion of Hanmer's affairs.

"It's only about a pump," Ben said to him, "not worth dragging you out in the rain for. But you won't get off our entertainment at the Cottage after dinner. That's going to be very grand. We're exceedingly proud of our bag-piping."

Hanmer spent part of Ben's absence in unpacking, and part in conversing with Martin Kerrigan. And Kerrigan's theme was mainly a eulogy upon Sir Ben. He had probably no conscious purpose of pronouncing one; it was rather that a feeling, in which both pride and humility were elements, always urged him to impress upon persons whose opinion he regarded, how far he was from setting up to consider himself

the equal of his associate in the superintendence of Glenore. His caring to do so now was a sign that he held Hanmer in some esteem. The means he used were reminiscences of the circumstances in which Sir Ben and he had entered upon the kind of partnership so long existing between them. Most of these were new to Hanmer, and they all derived a special interest for him from the points of resemblance which had arisen in his own lot. Kerrigan came to a sort of peroration as follows: "There are not many like him, and the most of *them* wouldn't have done as he did; they'd have put a higher valuation on themselves, for one thing, and you couldn't blame them. But more than that, they might very well have taken nothing into consideration against the reasons there were for a man to be hating the sight of the place. I've often thought to myself that I should maybe have discouraged him from settling down where he couldn't but be reminded at every turn of the black day when the two of us went rowing out yonder"—he pointed to the sea, which greyly filled a window—"with Miss Merle, that his heart was set on to the world's end, and came back without her. I never expected that he would forget *her*, any more than he has, but he might have forgotten *that* easier, living away with every distraction and pleasure at his command, and rising to an eminence such as few get, and fewer still would give up the chance of attaining." Kerrigan had painted in colours somewhat imaginatively brilliant the prospects renounced by Sir Ben in remaining at Glenore. An attaché at Madrid or Rome would, perhaps, hardly have recognised the picture of his own lot. "However," he added, "beyond all manner of doubt Glenore would have been at a great loss, for he's wonderfully looked up to by everybody. And as for myself, it's not two offers I'd have got of the likes of him content to colloque with an ignorant old squatter, crumpled up half the time with rheumatics, and with as queer a twist in his temper as ever a bullock had in his tail; it surprises me."

But Hanmer, as he politely declined to marvel at Sir Ben's choice of a companion, was taking stock of the possibilities that his own future abode seemed to afford. His domestic half-sister and her jocular husband practically exhausted the

list, for he need not count the rarely occurring glimpses of melancholy Sir Herbert Considine and morose little Lord Fintragh. Rather than any of these he thought he would see the face just now before him, one of a rugged northern type, somewhat gaunt and grim, yet not less than commonly kindly, while more than commonly shrewd. In the matter of companionship, he said to himself, Ben O'Neill was really the better off, but here he was prevented pursuing this line of thought any further by a sense that his habits and preferences could not permit him honestly to claim a grievance therein. At any rate, he reflected none of these people would ever come much in his way, and would make very little difference to him, good or bad. Whereupon Kerrigan abruptly remarked, "You've got a neighbour at Kilcashel, Mr. Hanmer, who might be likely enough to give you some trouble in what you're proposing to do about that land. If he can he will, to a dead certainty; I mean the man up at Barnaglen Castle, Lord Fintragh."

"How so?" said Hanmer. "Oh, by the way, I remember Sir Ben was telling me that he has property hereabouts!"

"He owns a big barrack of a house over at Emlisk; his agent's living there now. But he has a few small bits of land, by bad luck, in this parish, that has given him a handle for causing us annoyance at different times. We've always found him a bothering neighbour. However, he'd say as much for us and more. He'd rather see the plague in the place any day of the year than ourselves."

"What makes you so objectionable to him?" said Hanmer.

Kerrigan laughed a little. "If you asked him that, sir, you'd hear some fine stories. In fact, at one time we had to get him advised by a legal gentleman not to tell them quite so loudly. My belief is that his chief complaint against us is a very short and simple one. Ah, here's Sir Ben back again."

A grey wheel whirred past the window, and its rider came into the room.

One of his first observations was, "After all, Hanmer, I'm almost sorry that you weren't along with me; you might have found it instructive, for a good many complications

cropped up about our pump site, and the disentangling of them would have illustrated our methods of dealing with such affairs."

"Was Long making difficulties?" asked Kerrigan.

"Oh yes, about the trespass on the quarry-hole field. However, we put a stop to that by suggesting a right of way through the bottom of it. Nobody wants it at all; in fact, it's an impassable swamp, but it made Long drop the trespass business like a hot potato. To do him justice, I don't think he has himself any wish to obstruct us. He was acting under orders. He's Lord Fintragh's agent, you know, Hanmer."

"We were talking about his lordship when you came in," said Kerrigan. "I was just going to tell Mr. Hanmer how, in my belief, what has mainly set him against us, is that he thinks we are helping to stick the people's caps too tightly on their heads."

"And I was just thinking as I came along," Sir Ben said, poking out a stratum of soft pink embers from beneath a snowy drift of ash-films in the grate, "of a more substantial reason that he'll have for making himself disagreeable to you over at Kilcashel. For I know he's the owner of a few of the most outrageously bad holdings, in the direction of Port Maguire; and if, as I suppose, your object is to give the tenants on them the chance of getting on decent land, he may have to wait long enough before he finds anybody else to pay him rent for his bits of shingle and seaweed; they're really no better. An amphibious goat is about the only creature you could imagine getting any sort of livelihood on them."

"The rental must be a very small matter, I should think," said Hanmer.

"There are not any such things as small coins for Lord Fintragh," said Kerrigan, "nor would be if they issued quarter-farthings. He's a notable old screw."

"He is rather a deplorable old man," said Ben. "His career has been an apparent failure from every point of view. First he lost his own fortune in miscellaneous gambling, and then his wife's in stock-jobbing speculations. Now he's living on what he can squeeze out of the landed property he could

not make away with. It's heavily mortgaged, though. His son has some colonial appointment, but I don't fancy he sends home any of his earnings to the old people, like other emigrants. It would be the gain of a loss if he took it into his head to emigrate himself, when he sees the plague spreading into Kilcashel."

"Not a bit of him will," said Kerrigan. "He couldn't live so cheaply anywhere else. When he has got his last daughter married, he'll stick in a corner of his big barrack like a weevil in an empty nut, and creep out whenever he sees his way to doing somebody a bad turn."

"After all, that's but seldom these times, and to no great purpose," said Ben O'Neill. "I daresay you'll not have many encounters with him, Hanmer. It's some years since he has appeared personally at Glenore. At one time he had a habit of descending suddenly upon Emlisk Abbey, and requiring the resident agent's family to remove itself temporarily at a moment's notice. More than once some of them have had to take refuge here for the night. But the last time that happened, he somehow heard where they put up, and there was an awful row, and a change of agents. He said that at least it was in his power to discountenance hob-nobbing on his employees' part with ex-convict Australian sheep-stealers and their disreputable confederates."

"It's to be hoped," said Hanmer, "that Sir Herbert Considine's views are less extreme, or negotiations with him seem likely to be rather difficult."

"Oh, there's no harm in poor Sir Herbert," said Ben. "Circumstances have been against him, and his character didn't destine him to make much of a fight. That bad business of the clearance was in his father's time; he had nothing to do with it, and something he said to me one time gave me the impression that he'd have been glad to alter it again; but I suppose that would have needed a stronger sort of man. He has always been hard up, and latterly his son has put the finishing touches to his difficulties—one of those good-looking, good-for-nothing young ne'er-do-weels, who ruin everybody connected with them; and I suppose he's at the bottom of this sale. Have you ever met Lady Considine and her daughter? They're pleasant people.

You never do meet anybody, I believe ; but you'll have to change that, more or less, when you enter on our line of business."

Hanmer nodded, as one who would fain have shaken his head.

"Not that you need fear any pressing attentions from *Society*," Ben said ; "there's not much of it, as you know, about Kilcashel, and in any case it will be probably disposed to give you a wide berth."

"Like the plague, and Lord Fintragh's other dulcet diseases ?" said Hanmer.

"Well, of course there aren't a great many such curmudgeons as he is ; but most of his class do, with modifications, take that view of all proceedings like ours in their tendency."

"Are they really injured in any way, though ?" said Hanmer.

"Not that I can see."

"Then have they an intrinsic objection to an improvement in the people's condition ?"

"Well, not exactly that, as a rule, I think," said Ben ; "but to what's an inseparable accident of any improvement worth the name, they have the very strongest antipathy. They abhor everything that goes to make the people independent of them. On that point the great mass of them, good and bad, are practically at one. Of course a few elect persons like ourselves must be carefully excepted. The worse consider nothing at all except what they conceive to be their own interests. Their betters often go to much trouble and expense for the benefit of what they call "their people"; but always upon lines that leave it strictly "during pleasure." Model labourers' cottages, and Christmas doles, and clothing clubs, they regard as highly commendable ; but the bringing about of conditions under which there would be less demand for such things is a deed to be looked upon with the utmost reprobation."

"Ay, to be sure, their notion," said Kerrigan, "is to go on to the end of the chapter with their bits of charities. They've grand reports, for instance, of their Peasant Preservation Societies, that offer a half-crown prize to a poor

woman for keeping her mud-floor swept tidily. She knows right well that it's just giving a season ticket to the ladies of the parish to come prying through her little shanty, but the creature can't afford to lose the chance of the shillings, or offend them by refusing. And they encourage her to fill up her window with a plant in a pot, when she hasn't as much ground on the face of the earth as would grow a head of cabbage, nor any place but the roadside for the children to run out on; not a field one of them has a right to set foot in, unless to do a job of stone gathering or scaring crows. And then they say, 'Where would the poor people be if it wasn't for us?'"

"There's something in Kerrigan's immovable cap theory too," said Ben. "Undeniably the Quality love bows and scrapes dispersedly, and to be called of their neighbours your Honour and Melady. And they believe all that would come to an end with a state of independence. I doubt it myself."

"Well, anyhow," said Kerrigan, "if I thought that a man touched his cap to me only because he knew I could knock it off, and kick it down the street, I'd rather he let it alone."

"The sentiment at best isn't one that I've much sympathy with," said Ben, "and when it crops up in a person like Lord Fintragh, of course it has no redeeming point. But if we go on talking in the manner of Job's comforters about the people who may be expected to make themselves unpleasant, Mr. Hanmer'll think we want to put him off his plans."

"I don't find that it has any such effect somehow," said Hanmer. In fact, this forecast of opposition came like a little jog that set the wheels of his purposes running freely again, and he entered upon a discussion of kindred subjects with a marked increase in energy and alertness.

Two other visitors had arrived at Glenore on this day of blurring April rain. Water-bailiff Ned McQuaide had taken a holiday from his patrolling along the Doure River, and came over to call upon his cousin, Bernard Conroy; and Owen Kinsella had availed himself of a free seat on Johnny Tighe's mule-cart for a good step, to make his way thither

with the same object. He left Kilcashel while Mrs. Egan's four-o'clock cock was still punctually crowing; but Ned arrived some time before him, which happened conveniently, as Ned wanted to consult Bernard about certain private affairs. The cousins met in a small blue and white room at the back of Nolan's store, where Bernard, half-way up a long figured column, overheard the familiar voice outside his door, in an impressive whisper, bidding Katty Nolan "tell him a friend he'd know well enough by name had a word to say to him." Ned had a turn for doing things in a mysterious and dramatic manner, which, on the present occasion, was frustrated by the too quick ears of Bernard, who called to him, "Whethen, now, and is it yourself, Ned? Come in out of that wid you, man; this is me room."

"Well, but you're in fine grandeur here," Ned remarked, looking round the little room from his seat on the packing-case, which was Bernard's second chair; the other was a stool. "Sure, we might be sittin' in a big chiney tay-cup, and sorra the sup of black grounds at the bottom of it, aither, unless the dirt I'm after bringin' in on me feet. The road is swimmin' along like the lavin's of so many rivers, except where they do be shakin' themselves into bogs. It's soft walkin' entirely."

"They're quare dry houses in this place," said Bernard, "and no thanks to the weather. And the windows are wonderful lightsome. At home on a day like this, you couldn't see a stim, and the flure in the kitchen's liker the drainin's of an ould ink bottle than anythin' else wid the drips and lakes."

"What news have you from them?" said Ned. "I saw a man yisterday was tellin' me about a great dhrownin' there the day before; a big boat lost, he said, wid every man in her, but he couldn't tell the names. I know well enough Christy wouldn't be in it, be raison of the field-work; forby they'd ha' sent me word. But I thought I'd step over and see if you were after hearin' anything."

"Sure not at all; I got a letter from Delia a couple of mornin's back, but of course it wouldn't ha' happent by that time. Howane'er, she'd have wrote again fast enough if it was Christy."

"And did she be chance mention e'er a word about what I was sayin' to you the time I seen you over at Emlisk?" Ned inquired, having kicked the packing-case in a way which showed that he asked the question with some diffidence. "Delia bein' so great wid her, they're apt to have had some discourse between this and then, if you thought of sendin' me message."

"Oh, bedad, did I," said Bernard; "and I'll read you what she says about it this minyit." He drew a long letter from beneath the tin candlestick which was acting as paper-weight, and began to look for the passage required. There was just a trace of satisfaction in his tone as he read aloud:—

"DEAR BERNARD,—I mean to let you know when I was speaking to Biddy O'Keefe after mass last Sunday, I said to her me cousin Ned liked the place he was living in well, so he told you one time you were meeting him; and she said to me it was more shame for him if he did; and she said he had little to do to go take up with any such employments, but sure maybe it was good enough for him, if that was all; and she said Ned McQuaide always had an ass's grin on him; and she said Christy was worth half a dozen of him, in her humble judgment. And she said did I suppose he'd have the face to be coming back to Port Maguire any time? and she said if some of the lads gave him a crack on the head one of these days it would be his own doing, and no great harm either. The big rogue, she said. There does be talk in it now of the Family quitting out of this place altogether, when Sir Herbert has the land sold, but I myself would liefer they would be staying, for the Mistress and Miss Considine are nice ladies. Old Mrs. Landy is as cross as a weasel of an odd time——' But I see that's all there is about you, Ned."

"It's nearly enough, thank you kindly," said Ned. He swung his heels against the packing-case with loud thumps, and whistled fitfully, but was otherwise silent for a while. Then he said, "She might have raison to talk of asses' grins if she met with a man that hadn't more wit than to take and throw away fifteen shillings a week on account of them that know no better passin' remarks. I wonder

where else the girl thinks I'd have e'er another chance of pickin' them up. But for the matter of that, I'd give the ould consarn over at Ballydoure the sack to-morrow, if I thought it 'ud make her mind aisy."

"Maybe she isn't throublin' her head about you at all," said Bernard.

"Maybe the hair isn't growin' on the outside of it," said Ned. "And what for would she be ragin' that way if she wasn't? And axin' when I would be comin' back—did you mind that? Afeared she is I might be gettin' into a row wid the lads over the fishin', you may depind; but if that was all, I'd slip across to Port Maguire any day I pleased; only I've no notion of settin' her up with the idee she's to be dedicatin' to me what course of action I'm to folly. I wonder now could Delia find out be any means whether Biddy's really set her mind agin me keepin' me eye on the bit of river, for if she was on'y romancin', 'twould be a fool's trick to quit out of it; 'deed I'm none so sure but that I might let her like it or lump it whether or no. Delia's a cute little girl; I daresay she could aisy contrive."

"Not so aisy as you could yourself, I should suppose," Bernard said, suggesting one of those short cuts that present such obvious advantages to all who are not called upon to take them.

"The talk's not of aisiness," said Biddy's wary admirer; "it's the hould I wouldn't be givin' her over me wid lettin' on to her I was consarnin' myself about what she said. She'd remember it agin me ever after, and there'd be no gitting the better of her at all."

"Well, Sir Ben tould me they could allow me a bit of a holiday now that the work was slack," said Bernard, "and I was thinkin' I might take a couple of days and run home this week. So then I could see the way it was, and send you word."

"Good, man," his cousin said contentedly.

"The wild weather delayed me last week," said Bernard, "and now I'm stoppin' over the concert there is to-night below in the big house they call Miss Merle's Cottage. You're just in time for it. Grand it'll be; some of them here's fine singers."

"Faix, you're the great people entirely at Glenore," Ned declared. And then Owen Kinsella arrived.

Owen entering caused undesignedly something of the thrill which Ned had failed to produce ; for the cousins both connected his unlooked-for appearance with the rumour of disaster coming from an ominous point, and thought at first they saw a bearer of evil tidings. They were relieved and shocked to learn—the real calamity being remoter and larger than their apprehensions—how it was poor Danny O'Keefe and all his five comrades who would return to Kilcashel no more ; not even such relics of them as might be duly laid to rest among the pink crosses in the doleful burying-ground, thereby to make, as it were, an embankment for the wandering stream of the mourners' woe. But when all the details of the tragedy had been gone into, and the usual sentiments had been expressed, a perceptible constraint was felt among the three friends. Something clogged the movement of conversation, restricting its choice of topics, and conventionalising the treatment of those selected. All of them were conscious of this ; but it was Bernard who acted upon his belief that the cause lay in the presence of Ned, which hindered Owen from making some special communication to himself. As he knew that Ned had forfeited much of Owen's confidence by accepting his ill-reputed official position, this theory seemed antecedently probable, and he observed several trifles which tended to establish it. Accordingly he by-and-by remarked, "I was just tellin' Ned about the grand concert there's to be here this evenin'. We'll have some fine singin'. But it's a pity that two of the best of them won't be able for any performance this time. Andy Nolan that was to have sung a couple of songs for them took bad wid a sore throat last night, and is as hoarse as an ould crow, and Joe Mack, the illigantest fiddler at all, desthroyed his hand this mornin' wid a match-box blowin' up in it, when he was about lightin' his fire, and burnin' his fingers : he won't be playin' a note for a week, anyway. Mr. Ahern the schoolmaster's nately put out about it, for the houles it's made in his programme ; he's been runnin' about all day like a dog in a fair lookin' for someone else to be sticking down instead. You'd better take care, Ned, to

not be lettin' any of them hear you singin' *Shule Aroon* or *Garryowen* the way you was the other night over at Emlisk. They'd have you up on the platform, wid Mrs. Ahern tinklin' the tune over for you on the pianny, in the face of us all, before you could tell how you got there."

In reply to this timely warning Ned was much aghast. "Och, murdher, man alive, what are you talkin' about at all? In the name of goodness is it gettin' up on a platform I'm to be, makin' a show of meself as if I could do anythin' betther than just rowl out an ould lilt of an odd while to amuse the lads? Troth and bedad, it's good care I'll be takin' that nobody hears a sound out of me head so long as I'm in this place. And for your life, Bernard, don't you be lettin' on you ever heard tell of me singin' *Shule Aroon*, or *The Pretty Girl Milking Her Cow*, or *Glen of the Mists*, or e'er a one of them at all; no matter whether I can make a good enough offer at them or not. Just keep aisy about them." After this, made restless, no doubt, by the alarming prospect which Bernard had suggested, Ned fidgeted about for a few minutes longer, and then with the remark that he would take a look round and try was there any sign of the rain lightening, sauntered out of the room.

When he was gone Owen Kinsella said, "I wouldn't be spakin' before him, not but what I daresay we might, and no harm done; only as long as he's meddlin' wid that sort of work he'd better lave ours alone. I came over mostly to see are there any dacint lads here that could be trusted to lend a hand, if they were wanted for anythin' away at our place."

"Then you've got a plan?" said Bernard.

"It's the fishin'," said Owen. "Since the dhrowndin' of the men there's a sort of desperation come over the rest of them, and it's my belief they'll all hould together now and make a fight for the Creek, if they had the chance. So that's what I'm thinkin' to conthrive, while they're sinsible in their minds. It won't be a very aisy job, and I dunno rightly yet the best way to set about it. But the more we have in it the better, that much is sartin."

"I've no manner of doubt we'd get some here," said Bernard; "they're mostly very dacint people at Glenore, and the lads are apt to be all the readier by raison of knowin'

the differ between livin' where there's notions of fairity and where there's none, as they see whenever they set fut out of this place. Besides, there's sure to be plenty that would like a bit of a shindy. You'd a right to be spaking to them yourself; you've a way of persuadin' people."

"I'll thry get all I can, anyhow," said Owen; "you see, some of the lads at home 'ill be for raisin' some sort of a row prisintly, in any case, and it's the little rows are the mischief and spoil our big chances. There's no sinse in them; the tide of the say might as well think to be risin' wid a wave here and a wave there at any odd minyit of the day; 'twould be one while before it came in. But this time we'll maybe conthrive to rowl up a rael grand-sized wave that'll sweep all before it. You must tell me any likely, respectable men you know of."

The two young men fell into a discussion of ways and means, upon which suddenly broke a sound of vocal melody. It came from the adjacent shop, and was Ned McQuaide lustily singing *Shule Aroon*. Bernard smiled at Owen, and nodded in the direction of the song. "Didn't I know right well he wouldn't rest aisy till he'd showed them what he can do? Sure now it's a great one entirely he'd consider himself if they'd let him have a few shouts on the platform. He's got the voice of a hungry calf. I thought you might be wantin' to speak to me, so that was why I put the idea of performin' into his head, the way he'd go off and see about it."

Owen did not find Bernard's sarcasm quite pleasantly flavoured; although thus explained, there was something funny in the energy of Ned's song. False steps notwithstanding he had a liking for Ned, which in his mind was not compatible with much enjoyment of a derisive light thrown upon Ned's small vanities. There was dissatisfaction in his countenance as he said, "Bedad, you're a great schamer, Bernard."

"Is it schamin'?" said Bernard, "Whethen now and what else is yourself doin'?"

"Schamin' I may be, in a manner," Owen said reflectively; "but there's a differ, I'm not enticin' anybody to go off and make a fool of himself behind his back that way." He

moved impatiently as a louder strain of Ned's baritone rang into the room. "I'd ha' done better, belike, to ha' tould him right out meself that I partly misdoubted we could be talkin' before him. It would ha' been straight-forrader by Ned, and that's what I will do when he comes back. It might put somethin' else in his mind besides play-actin' and figuran-dyin'; and if so be I can bring what I'm plannin' to a head, we'll ha' no more need for schamin', good or bad, before very long. It's the best chance I've seen yet, because of them all bein' so mad about these crathurs losin' their lives. So if they'll just keep themselves quiet till we've got as many as we can together, and settled a sinsible plan, it's a rael good beginnin' we may make. And then when once they've seen what they can do, and get a bit encouraged in themselves, there'll be no end to it, troth there will not."

At any rate there was an unlimited range for the speculations on which Owen started, sitting silent in the little blue and white room, and staring out upon the green and grey of a still, grassy nook, whither wreaths of rain-mist drifted, ever and anon shot with silvery gleams. Ned's singing continued to resound. He had found an appreciative audience, who might be expected to spread abroad a report of his talent.

It was only natural that Ned McQuaide's aspirations, being very much more reasonable than Owen Kinsella's, should meet with speedier fulfilment. When that evening's seven o'clock drew the concert-goers of Glenore to the big hall in Miss Merle's Cottage, his name was to be seen put down for two items on the programme, copies of which, in the emulous roundhand of Mr. Ahern's most accomplished penmen, were conspicuous about the entrance. One pair of eyes read it with animosity a-twinkle. Mick Losty, a keen-witted contemporary of Bernard Conroy, had unsuccessfully considered himself a suitable candidate for the post of book-keeper, and now having identified this new artiste as a kinsman of the promoted outsider, was primed with hostile criticism of Ned's renderings. He accompanied *Shule Aroon* with a series of grotesque grimaces and gesticulations, calculated to discomfort, and commented upon *The Glen of the Mists* by many ostentatious yawns and stretches, even less

reassuring to the performer. But, on the other hand, there was Owen Kinsella clapping and stamping all the more enthusiastically because he felt himself to be at the same time applauding the resolution which he had just prevailed upon Ned to form against "havin' anythin' more to do wid the trade of a bailiff." The audience included a more unbiassed judge than either of these in the person of Ulick Hanmer. His attention, however, was chiefly occupied by objects other than the music. Of that he had merely a vague general sense that harmonium's howl and accordion's bray were absent from it, and that the livelier notes of piano and fiddle alternated with those of the bagpipe, an instrument almost human in its struggles against the handicapping of grotesquely adverse circumstances. He received more sharply-defined impressions from the aspect of the spacious, pleasantly proportioned room, fitted with pitch-pine, clearly and sunnily brown, and of the persons who filled it, making a soft glow of colour with their home-spun, home-dyed garments, dim purples and crimsons, and mellow russets and greys. Yet somehow from the moment of their arrival until the time when Ben O'Neill was congratulating Mrs. Ahern, the accompanist, while men and boys were whisking away the light wickerwork chairs and benches, in preparation for the concluding dance, the scene that came most persistently before Hanmer's mind was the incongruous one of the wild white sea and the perishing boat-load, "which he heard cry, which he saw sink."

It continued to haunt him throughout the next day, when the fresh April world seemed canopied by a translucent gentian-petal, and the sunshine was burnished with dew, and it really prompted his determination not to prolong his stay beyond the morrow, although his hosts were at first inclined to regard this as an indication that he had had as much as he could stand of inspecting creameries and hand-looms and wicker-work, and receiving information about tillage and tillers. However, he convinced them both that he had a different motive. "I want to see Sir Herbert's man of business again as soon as possible," he told them as they returned through the afternoon gold-upon-green from a visit to old Mack, the carpenter. "I had an interview with

him at Loughadea on my way here, and from what he said I believe Sir Herbert wishes to sell without delay. I'd be glad to get the land into my hands immediately, for I suppose it will be some little time before we can get the people on it ; and in the meanwhile, you see, they'll go on drowning themselves in their crazy boats. They say the mackerel-fishing will be in full swing next month, and there's often tremendously rough weather in May."

"You'll hardly have got much done by then, at the usual rate of legal progress," said Ben.

"And there'll be all manner of things to see after," said Hanmer. "In the first place, I don't know what the relation of supply and demand is likely to be in the matter of holdings."

"There are nearly a thousand acres, mostly of very fair land, that's certain ; but how far will that go towards accommodating these farming-fishing people? We'll have to cut our coat according to our cloth."

"Not into over small shreds, or it won't fit man or beast," said Kerrigan.

"And there'll be cottages to build," said Hanmer ; "but you two will come over and stay with me for a while, and show us how to get under way."

"I see only one objection to that," said Ben ; "mightn't our intervention stir up Lord Fintragh against you unnecessarily, we being notorious characters with him?"

"I wouldn't think so," said Kerrigan, "not to the value of a bit of good advice, anyhow, and it would be a queer thing if we couldn't give Mr. Hanmer more than a few. He'll want it all too. For he's starting with more ignorance than ever you did, Sir Ben, and if I'm not mistaken, he'll not be by a long way as quick as you were about gettin' rid of it." Here Kerrigan became conscious that he was yielding, at the expense of civility, to a half-jealous sentiment towards a possible rival of Sir Ben's local importance, and he added with some self-reproach, "Not but what you've picked up some things fast enough, sir, even since you've been here. It was a very right opinion you gave just now about Felix Mack's colt. He's a deal too long-barrelled to promise much at the leppin', and I'd never think a horse with no

better shoulders than that on him worth training for a hunter."

Hanmer was so disingenuous as to accept this compliment without acknowledging how his acute remark had been made under the misapprehension that in the unkempt-looking, long-tailed chestnut to which old Mack had called his notice, he saw an animal well stricken in years. And Ben said, "You must send us word when you want us, and one or other of us, at any rate, can easily come over."

Talking of the next day's travelling arrangements that evening, Ben said to Hanmer, "Your protégé young Conroy's going home, too, on a holiday. He does very well at his business, and seems to be an intelligent, decent young fellow, but he's always rather down on his luck. If he wasn't quite so youthful, I'd think he'd been crossed in love."

"It's nothing of that sort, I'm sure," Hanmer said, with a confidence, the grounds of which, as he recollected just in time, he could not divulge.

Bernard was, on the whole, glad to be turning his face homeward for a while. His life at Glenore suited him in most respects, and his surroundings there contrasted marvellously with those that awaited him at Port Maguire, as he rather repiningly knew. But of late he had met with a few unpleasant experiences, which might have been described as crosses in love, only the love was not of the sort that is, singularly enough, credited with a monopoly of crosses. One of these experiences concerned a fond hope which he had for some time past entertained, and which led him to spend all his leisure moments in what his landlady called "scrawming." For midway in his ambitious astronomical treatise entitled *The Moon's Face*, a slight shrinkage in the vast main flood of ignorance by whose shore he was writing, revealed to him a fact which converted his little sheaf of laboriously gathered manuscript into a handful of chaff, and made all his toil a futile foolishness. About this time, too, he had some disagreeable encounters with members of the Pat Losty family, whose Mick, through a not unblemished character for uprightness, had failed to obtain the book-keeper's post. Mrs. Pat had more than once found an opportunity to talk loudly in his hearing about them that came sneakin' into the

place out of the Lord knows where at all, and hindered a crippled man's son of gettin' his own livin', and earnin' a few comforts for his poor father. And such things, though but trifles, were seriously mortifying to one whose desire for his neighbours' esteem had little of his own to encourage it. Bernard's vanity was ever in a state of instable equilibrium, which left it at the mercy of a breath, and this, as we have seen, made him an unsympathetic observer of his cousin Ned's, because that merely oscillated slightly at a rebuff, being secured by the stays of a sturdy good conceit. Thus, a little cloud of disappointment and disgust had lowered over Bernard, and a brief excursion back into his old life seemed likely to disperse it not unpleasantly. He looked forward much to the meeting with his cousin Christy and his sister Delia, and the two kindly older women, whom he called Aunt Julia and Aunt Ally; with more doubtful feelings he anticipated the probability of an imminent conflict between the Kilcashel fishermen and their foes. There was, of course, some pleasurable excitement in such a prospect, and as long as he remained in Owen Kinsella's company that kept uppermost. But when the convincing voice and countenance were withdrawn, difficulties and dangers sprang up like a many-headed Jack-in-the-box, and the lid could not easily be got on again. Still, he had every intention of loyally furthering Owen's views.

Thinking of these matters, he was seated on the long car, which had halted at Bresk, half-way between Loughadea and Kilcashel, to pick up a mail-bag. Ulick Hanmer was the only other passenger on that side. Presently a high trap came slowly towards them down the steep village street and drew up at the post office, one of the occupants swearing at the long car for not making way fast enough. As the car driver moved on a few paces Hanmer felt a touch on the arm. "Do you see him, sir?" said Bernard. Hanmer looked back with him, and saw alighting from the trap a youngish, stout man, with a round white face, sandily frilled and sulky. A glass stuck in one eye fantastically suggested the second-hand on a clock-dial. "That's Tim Galvin," Bernard whispered, "the fellow who took me poor father's money."

"I think you're mistaken," Hanmer replied ; "I saw that man last month at Tubbermaglen. His name's Vittie, and he's a great brewer or grocer ; immensely rich, they say."

"Mistaken I couldn't be, sir," said Bernard. "Tim Galvin it is. I mind the rogue's face of him—the devil reap it off him—as well as if I was after seein' it yesterday, instead of a dozen year ago."

"Twelve years make a great difference," Hanmer said, and as the car just then jolted into a trot the subject dropped. It soon dropped, too, out of Hanmer's mind. But Bernard pondered long and deeply on the incident.

CHAPTER IV

KERRIGAN and Ben O'Neill received Hanmer's summons to Kilcashel sooner than they had expected—within a few days, indeed, of his departure from Glenore. He reported that the purchase of the land was now practically arranged, and for completion needed only the signature of sundry legal documents, the preparation of which might be a matter of some little time. "But I want you to come over here at once," he wrote, "for this reason. I am told and see that the fishermen are all much enraged at their exclusion from their old fishing-grounds, and it seems very likely that some of them will before long come into violent collision with the proprietors and police, who are watching the water. I can't say that I should regret such an event if the fishers had a fair chance of getting the best of it, but of course they have none, and would only add shooting and imprisonment to their prospects of starving or drowning. It seems to me that if they knew about the other prospect which the change in the ownership of those grass-lands may open to them, they would trouble themselves less over this fishing business, and be all the less disposed to take any rash steps. I believe there are very few of them who would stick to a one-foot-on-sea-and-one-on-shore life if they could help it. But I myself have not ventured to say a word to them on the subject, because in my ignorance I might easily make misstatements, and raise impossible expectations, which would be an unfortunate blunder to start with. So it would be of the greatest service if you and Mr. Kerrigan would come here now and make yourselves acquainted with the facts—which you can do immensely faster than I—and then explain our plans roughly, at least, to the people. It might save a great deal of bother if they knew that they would have some decent

land to work on within the next few months, as I hope may be the case. Thompson, the sheep-farmer, is taking his sheep off immediately.

"I have heard nothing of Lord Fintragh, who is, I suppose, blissfully unaware of the impending outbreak in his neighbourhood. I see that at the point where his territories approach nearest to ours, a river and several fields intervene, so if he keeps himself to himself, he can't well come in our way."

This request seemed reasonable to his friends at Glenore, and they lost no time in complying with it. The day after their arrival was devoted to investigations and note-taking, carried on by means of foot, car, and cycle; the evening to calculations and estimates, which were dealt with so expeditiously that nothing appeared to forbid Hanmer and his guests from availing themselves of the opportunity offered by the morrow's Sunday masses and concourse of the parish. They were inclined to act with promptitude by the symptoms they had everywhere diagnosed of intense irritation against the closers of the Creek. It had betrayed itself in vivid and picturesquely descriptive epithets applied to the party at Moygarna Lodge and the guardians of their sport. Nor did it seem likely to stop short of measures more vigorous than epithets. Kerrigan came upon traces of a fairly well-organised conspiracy to tow "himself with the monkey face and baggy coateen, sittin' stuck up in his bit of a boat like a gallon stopper in a pint bottle"—who was no other than portly Mr. Dawson in his favourite miniature outrigger—"out away beyant the Inishes, and lave him there to get home again however he could." Other schemes, less elaborate, but promising, perhaps, more disastrous consequences, were often hinted at, and all this pointed to the perils of procrastination.

Therefore the morrow's noontide found Ulick Hanmer, Martin Kerrigan, and Ben O'Neill sitting on the low wall of the chapel-yard at a place where the issuing congregation could be conveniently intercepted. And for an hour or so they were engaged in apprising successive groups of the proposed arrangements about the bit of the countryside which had just changed hands. The visitors from Glenore

were the chief spokesmen. The statements they made were in substance that Mr. Hanmer was about to buy Sir Herbert Considine's grass-lands, and that he intended to let them in small holdings, on terms which would be easy for the present payers of even the lowest rent, to people living in and about Kilcashel and Port Maguire. Mr. Hanmer also meant to build, and help in building, houses for his tenants, and to undertake some of the fencing and draining. And this new order of things was to begin as soon as the lawyers had finished their business, which would probably be in the course of a few weeks. After the delivery of a message to this effect, Hanmer would sometimes follow like a chorus, with a hope that many of the hearers would before long be working on better land, and have no need to leave their farming for fishing. The communication, made, as we see, with no attempt at eloquence or rhetoric, did not elicit any demonstrative response nor lead to any dramatic incidents. The tall, blue-jerseyed men frequently received it with a monosyllable, which sometimes was scarcely articulate; only a minority expressed gratification on the spot by word of mouth, without further reflection. Yet an air of pleased surprise was generally perceptible, and by-and-by from knots of men, drawn a little apart, a deputy would come every now and then to ask a question, which showed that the news was being discussed. As the groups swelled in number they became more fluent and animated in speech, so that a hum of voices arose round about, with a jubilant note unmistakably predominating. Inquirers, more and more eager, began to press upon the three friends, who in the end got away with a little difficulty, promising to answer all others next day at Daly's Cottage.

Then presently the tidings went travelling home, on foot chiefly, as few of the persons most concerned could command artificial modes of progression. The people who drove on cars, or rode double on hollow-backed ponies, were, as a rule, folk whose easier circumstances and remoter abodes made the matter seem one of no very immediate interest to them, and it did not engross all their conversation. But little else was talked about for the rest of the day in the huddled cabin-rows of Kilcashel and Port Maguire, and in

detached residences perched by chaotic grey beaches, where they often looked as if a wave had piled up with unusual symmetry a heap of weedy shingle stones. Many a dinner waited beyond its due time in the black pot, because the diners loitered so long to discourse outside ; the bit of festive bacon, whether provided or, more commonly, lacked, was hardly either relished or missed, so preoccupied were they with a foretaste of happier things. Of course there were exceptions. Of course there were some of the people on whom all better days but one must dawn belated. People like Biddy O'Keefe, who shrank away into corners from the clack of tongues, as though they were making a bitter mock of her, and said to herself that if it would only have happened a couple of weeks ago, he might have been alive yet. And some of those sceptics there were whose experience of life had confirmed them in the creed that *it is too good to be true*, and who here said in support of their faith, "Whethen now, himself has the fine talk out of him entirely. Low rints, how are you? Sure I hope we'll be gettin' our healths till we see a one of the new houses a-buildin'"—with much similar sarcasm, varied by a flat "May the saints have me sowl if I believe a word of it!" However, these *were* exceptions. Far and away more numerous were those who grudged neither credence nor rejoicing, which wrought upon the news in their minds as fertile soil and sun upon a sown seed. At Port Maguire, perhaps, the effect was most concentrated. Hardly a household was there in which it did not make itself felt. Even to poor little Paddy Cuddihy the unwonted cheerfulness in his domestic circle, the cause whereof he did not understand, brought pleasure in the form of an atmosphere pervaded with gleams of the good nature and forbearance, which were to him as comforting as the warmth of sunshine to a blind man. Even Owen Kinsella, who foresaw in this distracting scheme the crumbling away of his conspiracy, nevertheless recognised fully all the solid and permanent advantages promised, with larger possibilities spreading far and wide, and he transferred his hopes thither with little repining and an unswerving loyalty to the one dream that was always their goal. In the McQuaides' house at the end of the Row, hopes ran as high as anywhere, and

had maybe a clearer and livelier outline and colouring, because of Bernard's and Christy's acquaintance with Glenore. Kerrigan has espied Christy that morning as he stood listening in company of Owen Kinsella, and having formed a favourable opinion of their intelligence, made it his business to give them a more particular explanation of Mr. Hanmer's plans, with a view to its diffusion among the people. This, together with the fact that Delia Conroy, who was at service up at the Considines' place, and might be supposed an authority about their affairs, had come to spend the day with her family at Port Maguire, led the neighbours to look upon the McQuaides' house as the headquarters of authentic information concerning the topic of the hour. Many of them called there before sunset. Some few went walking in the direction of the grass-lands; while others, less energetic, contented themselves with the glimpses that were visible as they strolled about or sat on the beach. Altogether the place seemed to be roused and stirred, much as it might have been if a tide had washed up on the shore the precious harvest of some far-off fields; and not without cause, since actually a most unlooked-for tide in their affairs had swept before their mind's eye a coming wealth of sowing and reaping which had hitherto tantalised them with its distant nearness. "Glory be to the great goodness," Ally McQuaide said with some such sentiment: "But I'd never ha' thought any of us 'ud get the chance to be settin' our pitaties over there, the way Christy says we may be this time next year. Sure now, ma'am, dear, we'd scarce believe it wasn't some better place we were come into away out of this entirely."

"It 'ud be quare and grand," said ma'am dear, who was Molly Hearn, the mistress of a dwelling in the corners of which high tides sometimes left souvenirs of oozy weed-bundles, "to not be livin' quite so convanient to the say-shore. Do you mind, Ally, what happint our bit of oats last summer?" She referred to a very sad misfortune. The crop yielded by the Hearn's rushy field had been set for dryness in half a dozen stooks on top of the gigantic shingle-bank adjoining, whence an unexpectedly high-climbing wave had carried them to no fruitful harvest-home, while the unwary reapers tarried over their supper.

"There'll be a dale of people sayin' prayers for Mr. Hanmer this night," opined the Widdy Egan.

But among neighbours of the class to whom the acquisition of "a little bit of lan'" and immunity from foolhardy fishing was not any object, very different views of the matter were to be found. There were people in Kilcashel whose prayers on behalf of Ulick Hanmer, on that particular night, would have been recited backwards, as the saying is, with so deep disapproval did they regard his proceedings. The Moloney family came first in bitterness of feeling. To understand its intensity one must consider the state of mind which preceded its sudden evolution. About a fortnight had passed since they had heard of Hanmer's legacy, and much of the interval had been occupied with speculations upon the subject. In such circumstances a fortnight is quite long enough for hopes to root themselves in certainty and burgeon widely and wildly with leaf and blossom. Nor had anything happened to interfere with their growth. Nothing had been seen of Hanmer, but as the intercourse between Prospect View House and Daly's Cottage was at all times most infrequent, that gave rise to no apprehensions. What little was heard about him seemed rather reassuring than otherwise. Kenneth, for instance, reported having learned from young Dick Henley, who was clerk to Mr. Leslie, Sir Herbert Considine's man of business at Loughadea, that Hanmer had been at the office, *it was believed*, for the purpose of making his will. All the young Moloneys adopted this belief, and added to it a firm conviction that the testamentary dispositions were wholly in their favour. It would have been absurd to suppose otherwise when the question, Who else is there for him to leave his money to? remained so happily unanswerable. It was not as if they were not on perfectly good terms with their uncle. They did not like him at all; in fact, they knew next to nothing about him, and were certain that they would hate him if they did, but they had always been quite civil to him, and had merely kept out of his way as much as they could; so it was impossible that he could have any dislike for them, and practically certain that they might regard themselves as his heirs. Here, moreover, Kenneth's legal lore proved of service, enabling him to assure them

that even if there were no will, they would come in for everything as next of kin. Kenneth's own opinion privately was that the property would be left to him, but his brethren looked forward confidently to bequests of not less than a thousand a year apiece. What seemed doubtful was the date at which they might expect to enter upon these possessions. They were inclined to fear that it might be very undesirably distant. Even to persons not out of their nonage Hanmer appeared far still from the term of his years. The pleasantest solution of this difficulty was the theory that he would make over some of his riches to them immediately, and it might surely be deemed a fairly probable one, considering the cogency of that other question, How on earth could he find anything to do with it, living there so pokily in Daly's Cottage? In this connection sixteen-year-old Ethel suggested one day that Uncle Ulick would perhaps be murdered by tramps, like the lonely widow woman over beyond Crumlavin, who was reputed to have a hoard concealed in her thatch. Whereupon Cyril, the youngest boy, having reflected for a while, remarked, "But *what good would that be* if they got away with all his money?" To which Kenneth replied, "Ass, do you suppose he keeps it in an old stocking? Why, of course it's all out in investments—railways and things—or in a bank." And after this explanation there was a tendency among Hanmer's nephews and nieces to think that such a burglarious visitation would not happen amiss.

Their parents shared in their hopes, as modified by years of more discretion. Both took optimistic views, Dr. Moloney repeatedly observing to his wife that her brother had always been friendly enough, as far as he went, though that was not very far, and if he had a more sociable turn he might be the less likely to go on living in a hole-and-corner sort of way, which was much the best thing he could do, so far as themselves and the children were concerned. Wherein Mrs. Moloney concurred. Their anticipations for the immediate future as a rule hardly went beyond some help in educating and launching the boys. Still, this would make things much easier, and you never could tell what might happen. An encouraging sense of contingencies induced Dr. Moloney to put very much more than he would otherwise have done on

the favourite for the St. Lynstal Cup, which was actually won by a rank outsider ; while in like manner Mrs. Moloney felt that she could venture upon unwonted expenditure in the matter of new spring apparel.

And now upon all these high hopes and confident expectations suddenly descended a crushing blow. It fell without any warning at all. Rumours had come *via* Kenneth and Loughadea that Sir Herbert had found a purchaser for his lands, but there was not, of course, any reason whatever for identifying this person with Hanmer ; such an idea occurred to nobody. So the shock was violent when on that fine Sunday afternoon Gerald and Noel rushed indoors to announce how Peter Doherty had just told them that Uncle Ulick had bought all the Considines' land for the poor people, and intended to build fifty new houses on it at once, and give each family a cow and a couple of pigs, and to spend every penny he had on it, the same way that Sir Ben and Kerrigan were doing at Glenore. These tidings were at first scouted with indignant disbelief ; but incredulity soon became impossible. Several members of the family sallying forth to investigate found that they were only too substantially true. Everywhere the same story, with more or less variation and embellishment, was being noised abroad. Dr. Moloney's attempt to obtain information from the most authentic source was unsuccessful, as, upon calling at Daly's Cottage, Mrs. Corry told him that her master had gone out for a walk. But she added, "I think he and the other gentlemens went to look at the property, sir. It's about layin' out a dale of money on it, he is, I hear them sayin'." And shortly afterwards the doctor fell in with Mr. Leslie himself, who destroyed all doubt with the information that the sale of the land to Mr. Hanmer was practically concluded. Other facts, moreover, now, in this new light, looked like confirmatory evidence. Hanmer's visit to Glenore, the presence in Kilcashel of Sir Ben and Kerrigan, even the circumstance that nobody at Prospect View House had heard a word about anything of the kind from Hanmer, argued the consciousness on his part of some guilty secret. If he had not known what they and every sane person would think of his doings, he would naturally have told them fast enough.

Hanmer's silence had not in reality been deliberate, nor due to any misgivings about other people's opinion. He had never at any time considered the Moloneys as factors in his plans, and he now simply continued to leave them out with reference to his fortune and the investment of it. Probably, if he had chanced to meet any of them, he would have mentioned the subject; but that did not happen, and it by no means occurred to him that the thing could make the least difference to them. Indeed, he had of late been thinking almost less about them than usual, because practical business had engrossed him with the domineering sway that, once admitted, it exercises over a mind not accustomed to allow it entrance. It is seldom possible, however, to treat our connections as negligible quantities quite with impunity, and Hanmer was not so privileged now. The ignorance in which they had been left seemed to the Moloneys an additional ground of complaint against him, and resentment of it enhanced the bitterness of their animadversions upon his outrageous proceedings. Those uttered by the younger children were vigorous and terse. They said that Uncle Ulick was a beast and an old fool, and they made derisive gestures towards his residence when they happened to pass near it, which somewhat relieved their feelings, but was, after all, but poor consolation for their disappointment. Their father used equally strong epithets and dealt in larger generalities. "Confound philanthropy!" he often said. "Charity begins at home, in my opinion. There's a short end to any chance of one of us seeing the colour of his money—not a brass farthing of it! Oh yes, I daresay those two chaps at Glenore have feathered their nest finely out of it; but they're old hands, they know what they're about. A muddle-headed zany like your brother might just as well stand on the top of the cliffs there and empty his pockets into the sea. Flinging away those unlucky boys' prospects in double handfuls, that's what he's doing, for a tomfool, crazy-pated fad. He'll land himself in the workhouse, you may take your oath, and it's pretty plain that he'd see the whole of us there sooner than do a hand's turn to keep us out of it; but a lunatic asylum 'ud be a fitter place for him."

"All the Delaneys *were* very queer," Mrs. Moloney would urge. Her disappointment was complicated with the mortifying sense that her family, after all, were not going to fulfil expectations long unrealised. And then she would relate once more the anecdote about her brother's great aunt's bonnet. "Well," her husband would rejoin, "the next time I see my gentleman I'll give him a piece of my mind. I'll let him know what I think of his keeping us in the dark. Not that it's any great wonder he was in no hurry to be telling people the daft idiot he means to make of himself." Bluster of this sort was, however, little more consolatory than the boys' pointing and grimaces.

Dissatisfaction was not confined to Prospect View House. At Barnaglen Castle on the Monday morning his lordship's atrocious humour became a matter of common remark, and was attributed by his household to several reasons other than the right one. But his daughter Leila was left in no doubt upon that point, as all through breakfast her father stormed and lamented over the calamity that now threatened their neighbourhood. The very thing that he had prophesied as soon as Sir Herbert's lands were advertised had speedily come to pass. Here was another criminal lunatic about to set on foot in Kilcashel the same diabolical work that had destroyed Glenore. If it could not be put a stop to the place would be unfit for human habitation. The brute might build his infernal pauper sheds in those river-fields, where they would be in full view from the plantation at the back of Moriarty's Lodge. It was a disgrace to civilisation that such people could not be locked up. He would rather, if he had his choice, have a mad dog at large about the country. Here Lord Fintragh splashed his cup of tea into the slop-bowl and demanded another, though he had no doubt, he averred, that it would be filthy bad too. At luncheon he resumed his grievance with undiminished energy, while his daughter listened with increasing weariness. And he ended by announcing his intention, just as he had done a few weeks back, of at once calling to remonstrate with Sir Herbert Considine. History had a tendency to repeat itself drearily at Barnaglen. But on this occasion Leila introduced a new incident by successful resistance to the proposal that she

should join the expedition. She felt that more of her father's conversation would not be sufferable, and she called the feeling a headache ; so he set off alone on foot, having decided to walk, as both the horses were lamer than usual.

Leila watched the small shabby figure out of sight with a mixture of relief and self-reproach, and then fell into reflections, which were frequent with her in those days. Her long spring at home had been full of dulness and discontent, embittered by misgivings that she had thrown away what was perhaps her best chance of more brilliant things. This chance was the suit of Mr. Timothy Vittie, upon which she had turned a disdainful countenance with, as it now seemed, a too completely discouraging effect. Since her return from England she heard nothing about him, except what she learned from occasional paragraphs in Society journals. These showed that he appeared at highly fashionable entertainments, was included in most select house-parties, went cruising in the smartest of yachts—was, in short, received in circles to which she herself could not aspire. His absence made it the easier for her to lay more stress upon that fact than upon his impossible vulgarity, his doubtful orthodoxy, his odious vans, and other unattractive features ; and as time went on her cherished conviction that her father would consider him out of the question as a son-in-law was modified successively into wonder whether he would do so, and hope that he would not, until now she had arrived at the resolve that paternally approved or no, the offer of such an establishment must not be rejected should it again come within her reach. But she was obliged to own that this now looked far from probable, and the more irretrievable they seemed the more did she regret her neglected opportunities at Ginglestead, the more obvious grew the inferiority of her position, buried alive in out-at-elbows Barnaglen, compared with what it might be if she commanded the resources of a rising millionaire, even though saddled with the heavy fine of a very terrible husband, who said : “ How's his lordship, your papa ? ” and who made irreverent jokes. So she sat moping and brooding over that high fortune rashly let slip.

Meanwhile Lord Fintragh succeeded in making his call at Shanabawn. Two former attempts had failed, and this one

owed its different result to his taking Sir Herbert unawares in the act of lounging about near the front-door. Escape thus precluded, Sir Herbert ruefully conducted his visitor to the library, well knowing the nature of the word with him for which a desire was expressed. For Lord Fintragh was accustomed to regard a distant cousinship as giving him a conversational right of way through the Considines' private affairs, a peculiarity which in their frequently unprosperous state caused Sir Herbert to shun his kinsman's company as the shirtless shuns a nipping blast. It was not in his nature to take more active steps towards barring that assumed right, and Lord Fintragh now proceeded to avail himself of it without delay, only as an agreeable preliminary declining to discard his overcoat on the grounds that the room was always rheumatically cold and damp. "I'm inclined to think," he remarked as they were entering, "that must be what's giving you the sort of drawn-down stoop you've got lately. You ought to open your windows liberally and be lavish with your turf. And what," he pursued, "is this awful business I hear about your land? It's not credible that you can intend to let one of those pig-philanthropy fellows into the place."

"I don't exactly know what you may have heard, but the fact is that sell I must, and immediately, or raise money in some ruinous way. So I suppose I'm rather in luck to have found a purchaser already. I've practically come to terms; there are only some legal forms to be gone through with this Mr. Hanmer, if that's what you mean. I know no harm of him. He seems a very decent fellow."

"Oh! and he hand in glove with that precious pair at Glenore. Perhaps you're not aware that he had them both up in the village yesterday haranguing the people, and holding forth about all the fine things he's going to do here. Promising, as I understand, to introduce the same abominations that they have there at Glenore. No harm? Why, the sight of the place nowadays is enough to disgust you for a week."

"I'll be hanged if I can see that it's any the worse," said Sir Herbert.

"I'm uncommonly sorry to hear you say so; I suppose

you've turned faddist. You'd like the look of a few ornamental pigsties on your front lawn—detached residences for the new country gentry."

"We're not staying here," said Sir Herbert, "so we shall be spared the sight in any case."

"It's this monstrous selfishness," Lord Fintragh then said passionately, "that ruins the country, and before long will wreck society. Here you are making over your estate to a socialist lunatic, putting landed property into the hand of an organised gang of swindling agitators, and turning tail to run off and leave us infested with them. The thing's spreading like gangrene! By George! there'll soon not be a day's shooting to be had anywhere in Ireland. I don't believe any other civilised Government would be weak-kneed enough to put up with it for a moment."

After a long half-hour, in the course of which he had said much more to the same purpose, but he could not flatter himself with any effect, Lord Fintragh emerged wrathfully chagrined into the pleasant April afternoon sunshine, and presently came face to face with Archer Considine, who was whistling on a cycle down a shrubbery walk.

Archer had just concluded an interview with his sister, having ridden over from Moygarna Lodge in quest of supplies. He had met Griselda in the garden, which was lucky, as he did not care just then for more intercourse with his family than cards and billiards had rendered unavoidable. These made short work of a few pounds, he explained to his sister, "and yet, Grill, the Lodge is as cheap a place as I can stay at—as any that aren't too slow, at least—because, you see, there are no travelling expenses."

Griselda knew by his calling her Grill that he wanted something of her, and she was relieved to learn that it need involve nobody except herself, since she could accommodate him with ten pounds. The sacrifice of her spring wardrobe was a trifle compared with the task of worrying her father for a cheque which might have been imposed upon her. Archer chose to wait out of doors while she went in to fetch the money. "I heard mother strumming away like Nero as I passed the house," he said. "There's no use interrupting her. She said when she wrote that almost all she had was

gone to pay a tuning bill, and for some infernal stuff of Schubert's, bad luck to it."

Griselda left him sitting on the low horizontal bough of an old laurustinus bush, and gently bobbing up and down. When she had gone a few steps he called after her, "It'll be a very temporary loan, so if you find that you can spare anything more, you may as well bring it along." She did find just one more sovereign, and her brother accepted the slight addition with a species of humorously rueful content. "The smallest contribution thankfully received," he said. "With mother's pound that makes a dozen. Quite a handsome little fortune."

"Then she sent you one?" Griselda said, flushing scarlet.

"She had nothing worth mentioning, as I told you," said Archer.

"If you had told me the truth, I shouldn't have left myself without a penny for her, in case she wanted anything," said Griselda.

This remark Archer gracefully ignored, or pocketed together with the money. "You must remember to remind me of it," he said, when it was stowed away, "or I may never think of it again, not being afflicted with a good memory. And now I'll be off, like the beggars."

As Archer, looking very handsomely unlike a beggar, rode out of sight, Griselda, in whom much solitary leisure had engendered meditative moods, began to speculate about her own and other people's sentiments towards him, their nature and source; but with only inconsequent results. Upon the whole it seemed to her that his family's attitude towards him could best be accounted for by supposing them to regard the good-looking agreeable son of the house as a sort of feather in their cap, which it behoved them to keep dry and curled, because if limp and bedraggled the ornament could but cast a disreputable air over their general appearance. Nowadays the cleaning and curling of it had become a ruinously troublesome process; the cap would have been far more comfortable wear without it, and yet even a wish to discard it was impossible.

The feather was, however, in a flourishing condition at the time when Archer Considine and Lord Fintragh met between

the glossy-leaved laurels and emerald-tasselled firs. Considering that Lord Fintragh well knew Archer to be the cause of Sir Herbert's embarrassments, one might reasonably have expected that this encounter likewise would have proved far from amicable ; but the illogical fact was that when the agile youth in grey hopped sideways off his roadster, with courteous apologies for the somewhat narrowly averted collision, the small elderly man in the shabby brown overcoat turned upon him a countenance of several degrees less grimness, and said nothing more uncivil than, "Ah, you've taken to trundling yourself about like all the rest of them. As well be out of the world as out of the fashion. My daughter's been bothering me to let her begin. I tell her she may get one of the gardeners to wheel her round the place in a barrow, if she likes that sort of exercise, but I won't have her making an object of herself on the roads." It was not, however, that he had loosened his grip of the main grievance. His next words were, "Oh, my dear fellow, if you have any influence with your unfortunate father, do use it to prevent him from this insane and iniquitous step, allowing his property to fall into the clutches of these blatant brigands ! It's a crime against society."

"My dear Lord Fintragh," Archer said affectionately, "I'm afraid I've got very little influence with him. And, you see, we're obliged to sell. It would be awfully jolly now if *you* bought the land. I wish you would."

"I ! Good heavens ! it will be as much as I can do to keep the few screeds I have left together for my poor boy. The Lord knows I couldn't put my hand on a thousand pounds this minute."

"It's only cads and bounders who have got any money in these days," said Archer, "and I suppose to-morrow it will be roughs and corner-boys. There's an extraordinary specimen staying where I am, with the Fred Dawsons at Moygarna Lodge—Timothy Vittie, a man in the grocery business ; they call him the Margarine Millionaire, and I believe he's rolling in untold gold. Last night I suggested to him that he should make an offer for our bit of land. He'd be a better customer, by all accounts, than that ass Hanmer. I've seen him mooning about here, and he looks as if he might have a screw

loose. There's some method in his madness, though, for I don't believe he's giving my poor father anything like the price we ought to get. Vittie could easily outbid him."

"For God's sake get him to do it," said Lord Fintragh. "Upon my honour, you'd be a public benefactor. It would be the salvation of the neighbourhood. There'd be no fear of his going in for these philanthropic fads and antics, cutting it up into sites for piggeries and fine-art institutes, and all that idiocy."

"Oh, trust him for that!" said Archer. "I should say he'd be much more likely to build a twelve-foot wall round the whole of it."

"I wish to God he would," Lord Fintragh said fervently, and with that pious aspiration they parted.

CHAPTER V

WHEN the passengers on the long car had that glimpse of Mr. Vittie at Bresk Post Office, he was not without some excuse for looking morose and displaying irritation. The errand he had been about was of an unexhilarating kind, and had turned out rather more disagreeable than he had expected. He was returning from a visit to his mother, who within the last few weeks had become an inmate of Dr. Gregory's private lunatic asylum, several long miles beyond the village among the bog-lands towards Lough Orane. Thither he had conveyed her after her seizure at Tubbermaglen, recalling popular preacher Gregory's recommendation of his brother's remotely situated establishment. Very remote indeed was the situation of Saville House, a bleak, white building, which stood tall and thin in its neglected grounds, on the edge of a wide olive-brown waste, with grey glimmers of water far off to east and north sent by a lough and an estuary. Long and lonesome roads led its few visitors to their dismal destination, where they found themselves among surroundings that harmonised well with any sort of forlorn failure. The proprietor, Dr. Gregory, was not at all a discordant note, being a gaunt and cadaverous version of his reverend brother—the skeleton, as it were, that he might have come to had he fallen upon leaner days. Dr. Gregory had ended his professional career in England under a cloud, which seemingly had to some extent crossed the Channel with him, and hung obstructively about his path. Saville House never prospered highly, notwithstanding that brother Charles advertised it zealously, and, although he could not boast of a name so famously “up in the country for preaching people mad” as the Evangelist

Newton's, did every now and then provide a patient. At the time of the Vitties' arrival the privileges of Saville House were enjoyed by only a single inmate, a scared-looking creature, who spent his life in watching for the one kind face he had ever known to come and take him away. Accordingly Dr. Gregory was right well pleased at the advent of a wealthy patron, whose fees would enable him to send off his own two sickly little girls to a school where they would find the cheerful companionship for which they were pining and fretting. But almost immediately after her instalment there Mrs. Vittie was attacked with serious illness, which threatened to make her sojourn unsatisfactorily short, and caused her son to be hastily summoned. Her recovery from this malady was rapid, but her mental condition did not improve. In one respect rather it changed for the worse, at any rate in her son Timothy's opinion. For the whim had taken her to revert as completely as possible to the state in which they had been long before their fortunes began to mend. She repudiated the name of Vittie, and insisted upon being addressed as the Widow Galvin; she laid aside the not very numerous refinements of language and manners that she had picked up during their affluent years, and she arrayed herself, as far as circumstances permitted, in the fashion of Port Maguire. Furthermore, she frequently related, with much circumstantial detail, the whole episode of the stolen pouch, and inveighed violently against her son for involving her in the penal consequences of the crime by his refusal to make restitution.

"Of course, my dear sir," Dr. Gregory said suavely, "my long experience of such melancholy cases has familiarised me only too thoroughly with statements of a most extravagant and preposterous nature." He did not think it advisable to mention the view that this very experience now inclined him to take of Mrs. Vittie's coherent and unvarying narrative. "I need not assure you," he added, "that your poor mother's delusions could not be uttered with more perfect safety to the careless flocks and herds than they are within these walls." Timothy did feel safe enough, yet ruffled and annoyed, and then, returning, he was further perturbed by recognising on the long car the insolent brute of the name

of Hanmer, rancorous memories about whom he had brought away from Tubbernaglen.

Mr. Vittie was now a self-invited guest at Moygarna Lodge, financial relations between him and many of his acquaintances placing him in a position boldly to test their hospitality even thus without risk of rebuff, his hosts being sustained under the ordeal by a lively sense of the good things which they might find put in their way. He had thought it would be convenient for him to remain for a while within easy reach of Saville House; but this was not his only object in volunteering a visit to the Dawsons. He knew that Miss Roche had returned to her home in the neighbourhood of Kilcashel, and Miss Roche's movements were not devoid of interest for him. Although he had allowed nearly six months to elapse without attempting to see her, he had not dropped the remembrance of her out of his mind. On the contrary, he had stowed it away in an inconspicuous yet handy compartment, much as in his shop-serving days he might have disposed of some commodity for which there was no immediate demand, but which would doubtless be inquired for eventually. If he had been asked to give an account of his proceedings in the meanwhile, he would have said that he was "looking about him"; and now as the outcome of his observations he felt a strong conviction that this daughter of Lord Fintragh would suit him better, on the whole, than any other girl whom he could expect to win without much expenditure of time and trouble, two things which he grudged—the first because it meant money, and the last because it crossed an innate love of ease, unconquerable by anything except his commercial instincts. A wife with aristocratic connections would, he thought, lighten for him the burden of those social duties which were coming more and more into his line of business; and for such a purpose he believed that he might fitly choose Miss Roche, who was undeniably stylish-looking, and who would make Honourable the name of Vittie, though, as he understood, only in a lopsided sort of way. Miss Roche's Ginglestead relations had impressed him with a rather erroneous belief that it would be, in his phrase, "ask and have," and this, while it gave him a leisurely sense that delay was not

dangerous, at the same time invited him to think of her as a pleasant certainty, upon which it was soothing to reflect in chance moments of frustration and disgust. Thus she was kept in his remembrance until circumstances made it convenient for him to take a further step.

But now that he was actually in her neighbourhood, with the gables of her ancestral home visible from various points of view, and a call there impending, an access of diffidence came upon him. Memories of the Honourable Leila's haughty mien and repressive snubs grew suddenly more vivid than memories of her sister's flattering insinuations, and in his reluctance to face them he let a few days pass irresolutely. After dinner on the evening of one of these, he fell into confidential discourse tête-à-tête with a fellow-guest, who had impressed him as a very pleasant, affable young man, and with whom he had already had some jocular conversations about the purchase of land. This agreeable youth was Archer Considine, the son, Mr. Vittie gathered, of impoverished swells, a class who, according to his experience, were generally either distinctly less or more accessible than the rest of the world. Young Considine evidently belonged to the latter section, and had shown a disposition to be friendly and communicative. So on the present occasion, champagne and whisky having softened the seals of reserve, and the other people being all fathoms deep in eager fishing-talk, Mr. Vittie plunged into a history of the romantic hopes and fears which occupied his mind. It was not at all difficult for Archer to identify the "very highly connected young lady" to whom Mr. Vittie hovered on the brink of "popping the question" with Lord Fintragh's youngest daughter, and although outwardly he preserved the demeanour of a sympathetic listener, he was inwardly a wrathful one. All his life he had known Leila Roche, and for the last year or two had flirted with her at intervals, not indeed with any serious intent, but with feelings lively enough to awaken strong repugnance to the notion that she had been encouraging this extremely dreadful person. Was it conceivable that a girl to whom he had himself thought it worth while to pay a good deal of attention, and who really was by no means unattractive in her own style—not one that he greatly admired—could have

brought her mind down to such a Yahoo? For a few minutes he believed it was not; but faith in the omnipotence of the golden wand could not lightly be overthrown, and he presently returned to his creed that with money all things are possible. His encounter with Lord Fintragh had happened on that afternoon, and he now recalled with some amusement his own references to, it might be, his lordship's future son-in-law. He wondered whether Leila had given her father any warning of the coming event, whether she knew herself of its proximity, and if not, whether she would welcome the tidings.

Curiosity on these points, combined with the natural instinct to put out a hand in the direction of an object, towards which one sees other hands extended, made Archer Considine set off next day to pay a call at Barnaglen. He was quite aware that he must have affronted Leila Roche deeply by his neglect to do so long before, but he had not the slightest doubt of being able to conclude a speedy peace. And in fact, when he met her on the weedy terrace walk, a few pathetically reproachful glances from his very fine Galway-blue eyes were the only preliminaries needed to procure a favourable hearing for an account of himself, whence it appeared that he had for some time past been overwhelmed by cares, among which he had dwelt on behalf of his family, and from which at the earliest moment possible he had fled to seek the solace of her presence. This having been satisfactorily explained, Miss Roche became confidential in her turn, as they paced up and down along the lichen-greened stone balustrades and broken vases. "I've had an awfully dismal winter too," she said. "Nothing and nobody would be the best description of it. But now I'm worse off even than that, for my father's in such a state of distraction about your land that I think he'll soon drive himself, and everybody who has to listen to him talking, demented. I don't know what will become of us, if he can't prevent this odious Mr. Hanmer from getting hold of it and destroying it. Sometimes he talks of going away, but I don't believe we could afford to live anywhere else. It's perfectly ghastly."

"Do you know, that's one of the things I've been working at," said Archer. "I was sure it would be a worry to your

father, and to *you*. I've been trying hard to find another purchaser, and I've now some hopes of succeeding. There's a man staying at the Dawson's who I think has some notion of buying it. Of course, you understand that *I* can't well directly suggest the thing to him. Still, there are ways and means, and one would stretch a point to keep annoyance from *some people*, Leila, though they mayn't give one credit for it. If this Mr. Vittie—— Do you know him?" seeing her start a little at the name.

"Oh, there was a Mr. Vittie at Ginglestead last year," she said; "but not the same person, I daresay. What is he like?"

"Oh, rather a stout man, with reddish hair," said Archer, thinking it advisable to adopt a neutral tone. "Timothy Vittie, you know. I should say you must have heard of him—enormously rich."

"It is the same," said Leila. "Has he been there long?" She was experiencing a pang of mortified dismay. If Mr. Vittie had made a considerable stay in the neighbourhood without giving any sign, she must suppose his intentions to be abandoned; that opportunity no longer to exist. It was as if she suddenly heard the locking of a door, through which she had been more than half inclined to go.

"I shouldn't fancy so," Archer replied. *He* was nearly half inclined to utter a few gibes, which he well knew would go a long way towards ensuring a repulse for Mr. Vittie, riches and all. But he deemed it better policy to refrain, prudently reflecting that he would probably have further opportunities for sarcasm, should it seem expedient, since the grocer was obviously a laggard in love.

Archer stayed talking for some time after this. The conversation, however, wandered away to different subjects, and Mr. Vittie was not mentioned again. The report of it, therefore, which he by-and-by gave to that gentleman, did not certainly err on the side of a slavish adherence to mere matter of fact, and argued him an adept in the art of reading between the lines and hearing more than is meant to meet the ear. He found Mr. Vittie returning from a solitary walk, and hastened to inform him that he had now a chance of obtaining the latest intelligence about Miss Roche. Naturally

much interested, Mr. Vittie hoped, with a self-conscious smirk, that the young lady was very well, and inquired whether he might ask if Mr. Considine had happened to mention "the fact that yours truly was residing in the vicinity."

"Oh, she knows that you're here," said Archer, "and is evidently expecting you to call."

"You don't say so?" said Mr. Vittie. "I'd be the proud individual if I'd only got a little more cheek."

"She's looking remarkably well—remarkably," said Archer, "but she's very much distressed about this unfortunate business of our land. It's causing her father, Lord Fintragh, the utmost annoyance, because he had set his heart on the property falling into the hands of someone who could be trusted not to play the devil with it, as this ass Hanmer seems certain to do."

"He's an infernally impident, low-lived brute!" Mr. Vittie said with a vehemence which surprised Archer. "Why, I didn't know he was an acquaintance of yours," he said.

"I've had all the acquaintance I want with him, and more," said Mr. Vittie. "No great while ago, stopping at Tubber-naglen. He was along with a sweet crew. All I can say is that I wonder at any respectable hotel putting up with the likes of such a rowdy."

This seemed to Archer an entirely novel conception of Hanmer's character; but he did not care to dwell upon it then, having other matters more immediately in view. "Curiously enough," he went on, "some rumours about your intending to make an offer for the land have reached Miss Roche, and she's quite counting upon your coming forward to put an end to her worries by outbidding Hanmer. I don't mean to say, you know," Archer explained, with scrupulous candour, "that she said it in so many words. But it was perfectly evident that this is what she has in her mind."

"Well now, that bangs everything all round," Mr. Vittie declared, powerfully impressed. He walked away without adding anything more to the purpose, and apparently in a thoughtful mood. But later in the evening he communicated to Archer the outcome of his cogitations. Inquiries and investigations, which he had prosecuted during the afternoon,

had resulted in his identification of the purchaser of the grasslands with "the supercilious-looking chap" at the "Imperial," against whom a resentful grudge still rankled bitterly amongst his reminiscences of Tubbernaglen. Mr. Mulcahy of the public had pointed out to him Hanmer passing up the street, and had added the remark that he was "a very quiet, unassuming gentleman, but one of the ould stock you and me don't see too many of left in the country these times, and like to do great things for Kilcashel." Subsequently a rapid but not inexpert survey of the said lands convinced Mr. Vittie that to secure them even at a substantial advance upon Hanmer's terms, which he had ascertained from young Considine, might not be a bad speculation, apart from the pleasure of paying out an enemy. On the whole the transaction looked temptingly like one of those safe revenges in which it has been said that Jove himself, given certain special circumstances, might gladly indulge. And then, to kindle into efficient resolve a wish that might otherwise have smouldered away without result, came Archer Considine's report of Miss Roche's sentiments. Timothy was not slow in arriving at a resolution. He had for a long while past often found himself called upon to decide promptly in more important matters than this, and before bedtime he sought Archer in the smoking-room prepared with a very definite plan.

"I've made up my mind," he said, "to make Sir Herbert an offer, and I flatter myself that he'll find your humble servant a better customer than that other feller. I'll give him five thousand more for it—there you are—I will. I don't doubt he'd take less, but no matter; I'll do the thing handsomely when I'm at it. And what's more, I'll give you the chance of putting the five thousand, or maybe double it, into a concern that's paying fifteen per cent., and as safe as the Bank of England—there's for you. And Miss Roche's papa won't have any trouble with me, I can promise her that."

Archer's fine eyes gleamed wistfully and hopefully as he listened and did a little bit of mental arithmetic. He was no great hand at calculations, but the sum was a simple one, and the resultant income of fifteen hundred a year seemed to him far from despicable. It would, he felt, rid him of all conscientious compunction on the score of his part in bring-

ing about the sale. Pricks he occasionally had had; but now, such splendid terms being attainable, the transaction, debts and all, would be clearly altogether to the advantage of his family. And who but he was to thank for the chance of such a grand bargain? An allowance of five hundred a year was, he thought, the very least he would be entitled to expect in recognition of his services. With these encouraging anticipations swiftly astir in his brain he at once expressed his hearty approval of Mr. Vittie's proposal. "It's uncommonly lucky," he said, "that there's happened to be some hitch about those papers that are coming from Dublin for signature. Only for that the whole business might have been settled by this time, and it would have been too late to do anything. For Hanmer's just the pig-headed sort of man who wouldn't give it up once he'd got it, if you offered him all the gold of Arabia."

"Catch me offering the skunk a brass farthing, anyway!" said Mr. Vittie.

"There's no time to be lost," said Archer. "Perhaps you'd better come up to Shanabawn with me to-morrow and see my father about it."

"I'm agreeable," said Mr. Vittie. "It can't be settled too expeditious to accommodate me. For, you see, my notion is that if I could inform a certain young lady of your and my acquaintance of me having made an offer for the land, she might be all the likelier to look sweet on another description of offer—ahem! Isn't that your idea, now?"

Archer assented to this also, but in the presence of Mr. Vittie's shiny smiles and tendency to jest, could not get up much show of cordiality. When he had got away, however, he felt thoroughly satisfied with the turn things had taken, and he began to entertain himself by imagining, semi-seriously, a more fantastic and yet possible turn of them, which would cause Mr. Vittie to be the promoter of a match quite different from the one he was contemplating. Suppose that when all these money matters had been happily settled, and the fortunes of the Considine family founded anew on some vastly paying concern, the heir of the re-established house should step forward and carry off the daughter of Barnaglen from the captivations, be they never so alluring, of the margarine

millions! Archer had not the slightest doubt that he could do this if he chose, and the pleasantry of making one suitor provide the wherewithal for a rival took his fancy not a little; still, he was very far from thinking that he actually would choose. It was just a humorous possibility, though he had changed his mind in some degree about not caring for Leila Roche's style. On that afternoon he had been rather struck by the blond charm of her blue eyes and glossy fair hair, which he used formerly to liken disparagingly to daisies and forget-me-nots tangled in a wisp of hay. The acquisition of five thousand pounds, however, was a solid good beyond all manner of dispute, and Archer retired to rest with the consciousness of having done a capital day's work. There would presently be no need, he reflected drowsily, to grudge his mother her bits of music-books and things, and the thought conveyed him comfortably into his dreams.

But structures most substantial in seeming may topple down as helplessly as any cloud-fabric, if they have been based upon the sliding sands of somebody else's hypothetical consent; and so it was now. When Timothy Vittie and Archer Considine had made their way through the village, which as they passed looked forth over dusky half-doors at them, without suspicion of the plot against its dearest hope, and had frayed Griselda out of the hall, and had disagreeably surprised Sir Herbert where he sat forlorn by the library fire, it was only to learn that he would not hear of any such proposition, as he considered the land virtually to have been bought by Mr. Hanmer, and no longer at his own disposal.

This irrational view of the case could not easily be made clear to either of his interviewers, or rather could not be made clear to them at all, the fact that did ultimately become so for them being merely the unpersuadability of Sir Herbert. Some time was spent before even that conviction forced itself upon them, Mr. Vittie being especially slow to accept it, and clinging pertinaciously to a belief that Sir Herbert was merely labouring under a misapprehension about the liberality of the terms proposed and the splendid solvency of the person who would enter into treaty with him. He reiterated protestations that Timothy Vittie needn't be afraid to sign

his name to the tune of 'six figures any day of the week, and that he could write the cheque for the whole blooming amount, extra five thou. and all, sitting where he was, as easy as winking, not to speak of giving a guarantee about the shares he had mentioned to young Mr. Considine; and he did not desist until he had elicited several trenchantly worded refusals. Perhaps Sir Herbert would hardly have expressed himself with so much vigour if he had not been ill and irritable; but apart from that, he was sorely chagrined by the attitude of his son. To find Archer eagerly backing up this very unprepossessing stranger in his impracticable wishes was distasteful enough. But when he persisted in so doing after the fullest explanations of how matters stood, and frowned and fumed, murmuring aggrievedly about punctilious whims, and legal rights, and the unjustifiable sacrifice of one's family, Sir Herbert began for the first time to fear that Archer was something more hopeless than harum-scarum, and worse than a ne'er-do-weel. It seemed to him a calamity that his son and heir should be anxious to do a bit of sharp practice for the sake of some pounds sterling; to wriggle out of an obligation by the help of a lawyer's quibble, as if he were innately ignorant of things that are as essential as they are unteachable. After his visitors had withdrawn in high dudgeon Sir Herbert continued to brood upon this, and at length started the theory that it might be a sort of retribution for much unrighteous legal dealing on the part of his forbears towards people who had no claims to consideration on the score of gentility, that should make improper the employment against them of any device manufactured by the ingenious machinery of the law. Recollecting the means by which his father had rid his fields of many cumbering hearth-stones, Sir Herbert said to himself that perhaps he had no right to be overmuch amazed if his son now favoured the use of a similar method in transactions with persons of his own degree. Nevertheless, he was further harassed and cast down by the incident. As for the five thousand pounds so unacceptably pressed upon him, he could not help feeling keenly how welcome such an addition to his resources would have been; for anxiety about the future of his wife and daughter was a channel into which at this time his thoughts

generally flowed, with an increasing sense of futility, as when a crowd keeps on jostling into a *cul-de-sac*.

Griselda herself, looking in soon afterwards, led by apprehensive curiosity about the visit, drew evil auguries from his idle stoop over the dull hearth, and forebore to ask the intended question ; but her fears seemed to be answered when he observed, "Your brother appears to have picked up some singularly choice acquaintances. However, I hope he'll see fit to abstain from inflicting this particular associate upon us again. I declare the fellow spoke to me like a horse-couper complaining of a short knock at an auction. We should at least be spared such company until we actually have arrived in the workhouse that he's bringing us all to."

His grey look of age and grief stirred a rage of ruth in Griselda, and she caught up the first consolatory suggestions that occurred to her. "I wish you wouldn't mind. I don't believe you need bother yourself a bit about mamma and me, and as for Archer, he'll probably marry an heiress, and end a millionaire. You said mamma had nearly a hundred a year of her own, and she could live on that with a piano, which is really all she wants. I don't want even that much, for I think I've rather coarse tastes. I like stirabout, and potatoes, especially when you can peel them with your fingers, and it would be very pleasant just to wrap oneself up in a large shawl as the women do. Even if the worst came to the worst, I shouldn't wonder if starvation is as easy a way of coming to an end as most people meet with. But you know there can hardly be any fear of my wanting the necessaries of life. One could live so very cheaply in a clean cabin, if only one didn't care to be shabby-genteel. I don't in the least. And you may be perfectly certain that I won't ever be a governess, or a companion, or a lady help, or enter any sort of domestic service, or any sort of institution. It's these horrible substitutes for it that give poverty such a bad name ; people think that it must be something fearful, if it's worse than they are. I'm going to get Delia Conroy to teach me her lace-work. She says she could make five or six shillings a week by it, only that her eyes are not very strong. Now mine are as strong as a hawk's," said Griselda, with an accent of self-satisfaction which she did

not feel, for her clear hazel eyes were watching the effect of her words, and she was disappointed to perceive no signs that it had been a cheering one. It must be admitted, indeed, that she had spoken without much judgment. The details upon which she had dwelt were not very happily chosen, and euthanasia by inanition should certainly have been omitted from the possibilities of her frugal life. Her youthful indiscrimination had lumped up along with some heterogeneous matters under the disparaging term "shabby-genteel" many things in favour of which her father retained an unconquerable prejudice, and on the whole he saw nothing to exhilarate in the picture of a Miss Considine ending her days as an earner of shillings in a wayside cabin—however contented and clean. So he only said, as he poked the fire with a tremulous hand, "My dear child, you haven't the least idea what nonsense you are talking," and she went crestfallen away.

She next turned her attention to her mother, with more success. Lady Considine was out of spirits too, that morning, and Griselda noticed with dismay that she had shut, and even locked her piano, the faithful Ariel long the purveyor of pleasant noises and magical dreams to her island. It was her intention, she told her daughter, to play no more. "I've given up too much time to it, I know," she said remorsefully, "and if I hadn't, perhaps things might have been different."

"Oh, what nonsense!" Griselda said, in her turn; for human wisdom luckily can look both down and up, a change of posture which is sometimes a relief. "You'd only have had more time for spoiling Archer, and there was no occasion for *that*, I'm sure."

"Oh, my dear, if you knew what most young men are, and have, and expect to have, you wouldn't talk of the poor child being spoiled," his mother affirmed, with confident sagacity, which Griselda knew better at any rate than to gainsay. But she contrived to steal the piano-key, and started such a hideous rendering of *La ci darem* that she was speedily ousted from the music-stool, and enabled to leave her mother blissfully lost in the mazes of a Schubert symphony. Griselda loitered rather mournfully out of doors, feeling as if, like the filial sage Confucius, she had been

dancing in juvenile attire to beguile her parents of their ancient cares. And then she had a slight twinge of self-reproach, as she recalled how she had declared her belief that Archer would marry for money. "After all," she recanted, "he mayn't be so mean as that. I do sometimes think that he really cares about Leila Roche, and might have fallen in love with her, if he hadn't happened to meet himself first."

While his sister was occupied in this way, Archer had been receding, much put out at the unexpected collapse of his plan. So was his companion, whose grievances, however, were of a more sentimental nature than his own. The five thousand pounds formed the core of Archer's regret. Timothy Vittie was mainly aggrieved at losing his chance of spiting Hanmer and ingratiating himself with Miss Roche. Both of them had enough tenacity of purpose to make frustration intrinsically distasteful, and Mr. Vittie looked sour over it all the way back to Moygarna; but before they got there, Archer had thought of what seemed to him a fairly promising scheme for the attainment of his wishes. He kept it to himself, having reasons to surmise that it would not meet with his companion's approbation; and he took action upon it without delay, getting himself rowed down again to Kilcashel immediately after luncheon. His design was to consult his old acquaintance, Dr. Moloney. They had met a few days ago, when, the conversation turning upon Hanmer's affairs, Archer discovered that the doctor looked askance on his brother-in-law's project, and would gladly have seen it brought to naught. He had expressed the strongest conviction that Hanmer, who was as ignorant about farming as the beasts of the field, would lose every penny he laid out on the land; and he had broadly hinted that the Moloney family were justified in regarding this imprudent investment as a personal grievance. It now occurred to Archer that Dr. Moloney might with advantage be informed about Mr. Vittie's offer, and would then, perhaps, be willing to make representations on the subject to his brother-in-law. If Hanmer would consent to withdraw his bid for the land, it would evidently be to everybody else's interest, probably to his own. But should he require some

further inducement to see the matter in that light, a fraction of the five thousand pounds might profitably be devoted to bringing this about. The doctor and he might come to arrangements upon such a basis. Surely the man could easily find another estate quite as suitable for the scene of his follies. Archer had no such passionate feeling on the subject as Lord Fintragh ; still, he would undoubtedly prefer that they should be carried on elsewhere. He liked the look of the place as it was. Vittie, he knew, had intended to let the land lie vacant until next year, when a rise in the prices of sheep, already revealed to those who know, would enable a high rent to be obtained.

Pondering on these things by the way, with a sense that there was no time to be lost, he thought himself lucky when he found Dr. Moloney at home. And lucky again when he ascertained that at Prospect View House opinion disfavoured Hanmer's purchase even more strongly than he had supposed. He invited Dr. Moloney's confidence as sedulously as if in quest of a vote and interest, and by much the same means, inquiring after Mrs. Moloney, and his "old friend Kenneth," and conjecturing that "the young scamp Cyril" must by this time have outgrown his wish to be a blacksmith's apprentice, which showed flattering recollection of a Moloney nursery anecdote. And he was rewarded by very full particulars from Dr. Moloney about the hardship it would be to himself and his poor boys, if Hanmer's fortune were squandered on crazy philanthropic speculations, which suck up money as blotting-paper sucks up ink, and are just an opportunity for swindlers. Ben O'Neill and his friend Martin Kerrigan incurred much censure in this connection, the doctor attributing to their malign influence his brother-in-law's lamentable enterprise. "It's the last thing he'd ever have thought of going in for, if those two hadn't put it in his head," he said. "It's a bad job we ever went to Tubbernaglen. They're a precious pair, the two of them. I was up at the Castle yesterday, and his lordship was telling me what I wasn't aware of before—that this Sir Ben would have been one of Her Majesty's hard bargains, if he hadn't turned up at the Army Exam. too drunk to go in. They had to chuck him out. And as for that other fellow, Kerrigan, the less said

about his career in the Antipodes the better. I wish to goodness he'd stopped there." He was, on the whole, inclined to despond about the case. "You see, my poor brother-in-law's a bad subject for those sort of extravagant, doctrinaire, out-of-the-way notions to get a hold of. It's a dangerous thing for him. The fact is"—Dr. Moloney hesitated, seeming half doubtful whether to proceed, but resumed solemnly, in an oracular, professional tone—"the fact is, that there has been a tendency to aberrations of the kind in his mother's family—they're nothing to us; not on my wife's side at all. One of his aunts was a most eccentric person, very highly connected—a cotusin of Lord Whitborough's—but an extraordinary character; quite off the line, by all accounts. And certainly nobody could be more obstinate than Hanmer is over this business. It's like an infatuation. When there's an hereditary predisposition, I can tell you, one need never be surprised at finding a man developing what the French call an *idée fixe*."

"Ah, so they do," Archer said, as if much impressed.

Still, after some further discussion, Dr. Moloney agreed with him that it would be worth while to try whether the arguments he suggested would have any weight with Hanmer, despite inherited unreason, and the perverse counsels of unprincipled adventurers. The fact that Mr. Vittie was the competing bidder made the doctor additionally zealous, as he considered how high was the privilege of obliging a millionaire, one, moreover, who had displayed largemindedness on the subject of fees, and who might possibly become a resident in the neighbourhood. To Archer he spoke of Mr. Vittie as a "pleasant, affable sort of man," and discreetly forbore any mention of Mrs. Vittie's peculiarities. Finally, he proposed that Archer and he should forthwith go to see Hanmer. He did so partly because having lately addressed to Daly's Cottage what he himself considered a rather strong letter, to which he had not yet received a reply, he thought the awkwardness of a first meeting would be lessened by the presence of a third person, and partly because he liked to be seen walking about with young Considine, of Shanabawn. Young Considine, who had no corresponding predilection, demurred,

urging that it would not do for him to appear in the negotiations. But Dr. Moloney represented that the visit would be merely to see how the land lay, without entering upon any business matters ; and ultimately they went together, Archer balancing a mile of Dr. Moloney's company against the chances of picking up some useful information.

At Daly's Cottage old Winny Corry said she'd seen Himself just now a little way up the hill at the back of the house, and would his Honour and the doctor step indoors for a minute till she would be fetching him in to them ; for the long tussocks did be wringing wet ? So they stepped in to wait. What they noticed first in Hanmer's sitting-room was the writing-table that stood in the window with books and papers on it. A large volume lying on the desk was an agricultural treatise. It was open at a chapter on the Rotation of Crops. The papers were *Farmers' Gazettes*. Dr. Moloney pointed out these indications of Hanmer's studies to Archer with a wry face. "He seems to have taken to it in earnest," he said, "and I shouldn't wonder an atom if he stuck to it for all I can do or say." Hanmer had indeed been borrowing from the Glenore library, with a desire to diminish the burden of ignorance by which he had of late felt himself hampered at every turn in his new road. It was his habit to be thorough and painstaking in all his researches, and at this moment he had been led out of doors by a wish to find himself a bit of fool's parsley for comparison with a portrait of it which occurred in Bailey's *Manual of Tillage*. The same spirit of thoroughness had a few days before caused him to make room for these pursuits by clearing away sundry accumulations of rubbish, litters of circulars and secondhand-book catalogues, empty pen-boxes and ink-bottles, with other property, seemingly of no more value, unaccountably stored up in drawers. Along with the rest, he routed out from his desk a collection of useless trifles, including a small orange-labelled phial, which bore a fantastic inscription. All these he had placed promiscuously upon the chimney-piece, a disposition intended to be temporary, but as neither he nor old Winny Corry had any turn for tidiness, likely enough to become a permanent one.

Archer Considine now, ranging desultorily round the room, stopped to examine the chimney ornaments, and presently said, "I say, just look at this." Dr. Moloney laid down an *Agricultural Chemistry*, and came over. It was the little orange-labelled bottle that had caught Archer's eye. "*A Door-Key of the Smoky House*," the doctor read on it, in letters as legible as they had been when Hanmer idly traced them so long ago. "What's the English of that at all? It's his own handwriting, too. He's a queer individual." Then, scrutinising the bottle more closely, "Poison—Prussic Acid. You'd have no more trouble with houses or doorkeys if you meddled much with that stuff."

"Just so," said Archer. "Does the queerness you talk of ever seem to take a—a despondent sort of form? Is he down on his luck—more than other people, I mean?"

"Oh, well, no; I wouldn't exactly say he was," said the doctor. "He's always had a moping, dreary way of going about, but I never noticed anything of *that* nature in him—not to my knowledge. Of course you really can't tell."

Dr. Moloney's diagnosis was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Corry, who had failed to find Hanmer. The old woman's temper was ruffled by her fruitless tramp through the wet grass tufts, and she declared that she'd never seen the equal of the master for trapesing about like an old strayed cow. She believed he mostly didn't rightly know himself where he was going, and goodness could tell what place he'd streeled off to now; he mightn't be back till her heart was scalded trying to keep the bit of dinner hot.

Hanmer's callers therefore tarried no longer, Dr. Moloney remarking, as they walked away, that they were going home as wise as they came, like a couple of pigs in a poke, which was not, even metaphorically speaking, quite true. For they had both been a good deal struck by the discovery of the curiously inscribed bottle, and had drawn conclusions from it which neither of them mentioned to the other. But Archer's mind continued to be much occupied with it, and the more actively so when in a few days he received a letter from Dr. Moloney, stating that Hanmer had most positively refused to give up his bargain, on any terms, in favour of Mr. Vittie. The doctor enclosed the letter in which Hanmer made this

unsatisfactory communication, and in the course of which he frankly stated that he did not share the favourable opinion of Mr. Vittie's character, presumably expressed to him by his brother-in-law. After the arrival of these tidings Archer sat and thought deeply, until a plan began to take definite shape in his mind. This he did impart to Mr. Vittie, who was lounging close by in the verandah, and execrating Hanmer in his plaintive whine, for Archer had seen fit to show him both letters. Mr. Vittie listened with interest, and after they had talked for a long while summed up his views and intentions thus: "Well now, if you and Dr. What's-his-name could manage to do that, it would be a good job. I'd be glad that impident cad had a stopper put on him, if there was nothing else to be got by it; and it 'ud give me a lift up at his lordship's. But I won't be hooked into it, you must understand that. If you're put to any expense—fees and etceteras of that sort, that might be a consideration to you—I don't say that I wouldn't put my hand in my pocket on the quiet. But I won't go a step beyond that, mind you; and you'll have to keep a blooming sharp look-out. It's an infernally risky thing, I can tell you. There's no saying what you mightn't be let in for."

"Risks are only chances wrong side out," said Archer, "as I suppose some fellow has remarked. Anyhow, it's a fact, and they're the best thing one comes upon here below. I'll see what I can do."

CHAPTER VI

ONE afternoon, about ten days later, Griselda Considine ran upstairs to the sewing-room in very good spirits. It was April weather of the softest and brightest, sprinkled with fleeting, dew-like showers which seemed to keep the freshness of dawn in the sunshine until dusk, when it is caught up in the last lays of thrush and blackbird. But the main and immediate cause of her cheerfulness was that her father had come down to the library for the first time since his illness, looking more like himself than he had done for a long while, and had just been pronounced on the high road to recovery by Dr. Radwell from Loughadea. Sir Herbert had gone through a very serious attack, which had more or less alarmed all his household, who were now enjoying proportionate relief. That this sensation is one of the pleasantest we ever experience seems to some philosophic minds a fact that proves the unreality of happiness, while others see therein a benevolent device for extracting it from unlikely materials. Griselda, however, did not philosophise on the subject as she went, any more than did Maggie Doherty, the kitchen-maid, who scraped her saucepans with a lighter heart and louder song at the hearing that "the master was finely."

Griselda's errand was to despatch Delia Conroy, the sewing-maid, with a prescription which Dr. Moloney would compound. His house was no great distance away, and the walk would be a nice little outing for Delia. Entering the small oval room, Griselda saw Delia, slim and dark-haired, in her blue gown, sitting at the window with a long strip of white stuff on her knee, and the cage-born canary singing unrebuked in his stinted share of the spring sunbeams over her head. Old Nannie Landy was doing something at the

fire with her back to the door, which she could not hear open, so Griselda, being in no urgent hurry, silently took a neighbouring stool, and looked on unperceived. Into a pewter mug full of beer, carried upstairs after her dinner, Nannie had put a lump of butter, a spoonful of brown sugar, a pinch of ginger, and three cloves, and this she was proceeding to stir up warily with the thin little old poker, which she had made red-hot. When the surface of the mixture was covered with a creamy froth she plumped herself down heavily into a patchwork-cushioned chair by the hearth, and drank in sips at first, and in longer draughts as the concoction cooled, until she at last regretfully tilted an empty mug.

"You greedy woman," Griselda shouted, "not a thimbleful have you left for me! That's a nice way to treat your visitors."

Nannie had been hard of hearing long enough to grow used to sudden addresses and a world who moved round her with ghostlike tread, so the voice at her elbow did not startle her. "Wait," she said, catching the reproachful tone rather than the words—"just wait, Miss Griselda, till you're the age of other people, and it's mulled port *you'll* be drinkin', with lump sugar in it, and a dustin' of nutmeg; many's the tumbler of it I've made for the poor mistress, that was your grandmamma, Miss Griselda, but I'll scarce be to the fore agin that time meself. Delia there might be bringin' it to you."

"Oh, Delia'll have been married. You don't suppose she's going to sit here sewing all the days of her life," said Miss Griselda. "Are you Delia?"

But Delia only smiled, and shook her dark head ambiguously.

"'Deed then, Miss Griselda, if that's the talk you have," said Nannie, "you'd do better to be marryin' yourself than stirrin' up Delia's mind wid flighty notions. Me poor mother used to say three apprenticeships was long enough time to be puttin' in anywhere, and it's not much you want of bein' that long here."

"Well now, you're a fine person to talk," said Miss Griselda, "who used to tell me there was hardly enough of me to look ugly, and that that would be my only chance

of finding a sweetheart? I've grown bigger since then, you know, so I should think I may serve seven more apprenticeships."

"Och, goodness forgive me, Miss Griselda! sure, it's metaphorically people do have to be spakin' to keep childer from pride and vainglory in themselves. Not but what I've often thought," Nannie added, "it was a pity Mr. Archer hadn't the sinse, and you the handsomeness."

Griselda would have been more than twenty not to have felt a pang at this compliment to her intellectual powers, and her face fell a little. After all it had narrowly escaped prettiness by being slightly underhung, which gave her a resolute expression not altogether in accordance with her real character, though a certain clearness and candour of mind was truthfully indicated by her brownish bright eyes and straight-ruled black eyebrows. But old Nannie was continuing, "Why, mightn't you take Mr. Hanmer, now—he that's about gettin' the land? 'Twould be handy enough to keep a hold on it that way. He's a fine tall man—I seen him goin' by yisterday, when he was up here axin' after the master—and Mrs. Corry, that's his house-keeper, gives him the name of being a rael gentleman, and she's a very respectable woman. Her mother was one of the Traverses, that lived near me poor father's little place in the County Galway."

"Perhaps he might object to taking me along with the land," said Griselda.

"Set him up, then," said Nannie, "to not know what's too good for him. And he somethin' to Dr. Moloney, who's nobody at all. I wouldn't say you need be thinkin' of him."

"I won't," said Griselda; "at any rate, until he finds out that I'm too good." And then she gave Delia her message.

On her short cut across a corner of the big bog, Delia fell in with Mrs. Mick Egan, in crimson skirt and hodden-grey shawl, driving a magpie-coloured little cow along the springy causeway, which was raised above a very black floor, diversified with furzy hedges and banks and inky-mouthed holes. Mrs. Mick let the Kerry saunter on unsteered, questing from side to side with perverse, wide-horned head for a place to flounder down, and stopped to gather the

latest news from Delia, who might be expected to have some of an interesting and important nature. Nor was Mrs. Mick slow in coming to the subject which concerned her most. "And how's his Honour to-day, Delia? Och, thanks be to God, sure he'll soon be about again. And is there any signs now of the land business bein' settled? I do hear some of them sayin' the whole thing's apt to come to nothin' at all on us. But that 'ud be a quare bad job."

Delia had great satisfaction in being able to inform Mrs. Mick that she knew Mr. Hanmer and Mr. Leslie from Loughadea were to see the master the next day on business, which everybody thought was to be the signing of the papers making over the land. In fact she had heard Miss Griselda as good as say so herself. Thereupon Mrs. Mick said, "Glory be to God," and ran after her cow, while Delia continued her walk. A disappointment about the land would have been as grievous to her as to Mrs. Mick, or indeed to most of the people in whom the delay had begun to waken fears. For to the prospect of her cousins getting a bit of the good land was attached her own hope of returning home from an irksome exile, and of seeing the persons she most cared for provided with what they all wished for most. She delighted in looking forward to their happiness, even to Ned's, in spite of any remarks Biddy O'Keefe had taken upon herself to make about an ass's grin.

At the doctor's house the doctor was having his luncheon when the message from Shanabawn was brought to him, and he said, "Botheration to them! It's a fiddle-faddle thing that'll take half the day preparing. Why couldn't that old dolterhead Radwell have brought it over himself from Loughadea, instead of taking up my time with it? The little girl may just wait."

Lizzie, the parlour-maid, put the little girl just to wait in a small sitting-room out of the hall, where nobody could stay, because the ceiling was getting a coat of whitewash, as an inexpensive expression of a sense that money had come into the family. Some judgment was shown by Lizzie in thus disposing of Delia in a half-furnished, seldom-used room; to have expected Sir Herbert Considine's sewing-

maid to sit down in Dr. Moloney's kitchen would have betrayed much ignorance.

Delia waited there for a very long time, sitting in an obscure corner behind the door, and constantly dreading that some member of the family might appear, to find her intruding. At last, when the dusk had begun to thicken, and her fear was that she had been forgotten, the hall-door bell rang. This was followed by a bustle in the hall, Dr. Moloney apparently going to the door himself, and, as he went, objurgating the whitewashers for the splashes they produced. Then his voice sounded nearer. "Just step in here," he said; "it's our shortest way out of this confounded mess!" and to her horror he opened the door, which almost grazed her chair. With him came Mr. Archer and a strange gentleman in black. None of them noticed the presence of Delia, who rose up and curtsied, too much confused to see whether she had been observed. Her first thought was that Sir Herbert was worse, and that they had come to fetch the doctor; so she listened intently for the bad news, but nothing of the kind was to be gathered from their conversation as they stood talking in the window.

"It would be awkward to hurry the thing that way," she heard Dr. Moloney say.

"Well, but you see, it must be to-morrow or never," Mr. Archer replied; "for those papers will be signed in the afternoon unless something happens. I heard it accidentally from Leslie this morning, and went off at once to Dr. Gregory. He says he can arrange all right for to-morrow. But if my father had seen fit to let me know what he was doing, it would have saved me this bother of hurrying."

"Oh, certainly, without difficulty," said the man in black; "it will suit me quite as well to take charge of Mr. Hanmer without delay."

"And delay there mustn't be," said Mr. Archer. "For if we don't get him locked up before those papers are signed, we'll come a day after the fair; the land would be his."

"But how am I to get over to your place in time to send him back a message the way we'd settled?" said Dr. Moloney.

"Oh, you'll have to come home with me now, and stop the night," said Dr. Gregory; "and then as early as you

like in the morning we can send over a summons to your brother-in-law to come to you—illness or accident—something urgent. You've no doubt he *will* come?"

"Yes, yes; he'd come fast enough, if that was all," said Dr. Moloney.

"Well, practically, it's all that matters," said Dr. Gregory, with an encouraging smile; "for once Mr. Hanmer arrives, we'll find ways and means of detaining him as long as may seem expedient. I've told Peter Varley and Wilkins of Brackenbeg not to be later than twelve."

"Those blackguards!" said Dr. Moloney.

"They're a J.P. and an M.D., and that's more to our present purpose than if they were the brightest ornaments of their professions," Mr. Archer said quickly. "But I'll tell you what—we must get Vittie's business done, and safely down in black and white, as soon as we can. After that anybody who likes may whistle for the land. My father, of course, under the circumstances, can't possibly imagine any more scruples about letting him have it for his sheep-farming; but the sooner the better. It's a nuisance that Vittie's off just now in this idiotic yacht; however, I hear she's expected at the Lodge to-morrow or next day, and then we'll hurry up."

"And I must remind you, Moloney," said Dr. Gregory, "in case you have anything to see to before you set out, that my car's waiting, and we're a good step from our dinners."

"And I'd like to write a line to Vittie while you're getting ready," said Mr. Archer. "*Don't forget the bottle of prussic acid.*"

"Come along to the study," said Dr. Moloney, bustling away, and the others followed him hurriedly, again without becoming aware of Delia. She was much perturbed by her eaves-dropping. A few minutes afterwards, Lizzie brought her a little parcel, and remarked, as she opened the hall door for her, "The master's dinin' and sleepin' out to-night, and goin' off in a fine flurry entirely, whatever's took him."

"Where's he goin' to, and who's the strange gentleman?" Delia asked. But Lizzie, unluckily, knew no more than the black cat, and couldn't be tellin' her.

All the way back to Shanabawn Delia was wishing vainly

that she might meet with one of her own people, preferably Christy, because he had the most sense—though Ned was a deal cleverer—to whom she could communicate what she had just been hearing. It filled her with apprehensions, for amid much that was unintelligible to her, she clearly saw the outlines of a plot to ruin all their hopes by frustrating Mr. Hanmer's plans. That it would altogether succeed appeared to her to be only in the nature of things. How could the poor people expect anything to happen that the Quality wanted to prevent? And here was Mr. Archer himself wanting the land for another of those graziers, the thieves of the world, and bad luck to them! She supposed Mr. Vittie was the fat, foxy-haired man who had come to the house with Mr. Archer one morning just before the master was taken so ill; old Doherty said he wondered that the young master would be seen going about with the likes of such a *pleebian*. Her sense of helplessness was the greater for her ignorance about the details of the threatened stratagem. That Mr. Hanmer was to be inveigled away somewhere seemed quite plain, but whither, or by whom, her failure to identify the stranger in black prevented her from conjecturing. For anything she could tell they might be intending to do murder on him. It was a cruel pity, and a crying shame, she said to herself. Indeed, so desperate did she feel that she almost believed she could have made bold to have stopped and told Mr. Hanmer himself the whole story, if she had met him just then.

No such opportunity offered, however, and the indignation with which her tardy return was received up at the house diverted her thoughts for a time. But they soon flowed back again to the perils of the land and its purchaser, and after long lying awake that night she resolved to go out very early the next morning and try to find her cousins, some of whom would probably be in the village. And if not she would run over to Port Maguire; indeed she would, no matter what trouble she might get into with Mrs. Landy. Perhaps Christy, or Ned, or Bernard, or Owen Kinsella might think of something to do among them all. Delia retained a very antiquated faith in the superior capabilities of the lads. At any rate they could maybe warn Mr. Hanmer.

So at the first stir of the household's not over-early waking activities Delia stole out, intending to visit the strand where the fishing-boats lay, as she would there probably either find the people she wanted, or get an account of their movements. The last was all she did acquire. Thady Sullivan told her that her cousins and brother were doing a job above at Belrath Quarry, and to Belrath Quarry she set off "at a great gait of goin'," as Thady remarked, looking lazily after her; for it was a longish step, and time pressed her from several quarters.

Belrath Quarry is in the sea-face of the low hill-ridge on a landward slope of which stands Daly's Cottage. A huge slab of blue-grey stone has been shattered and chipped into a roughly circular concavity, past which runs the strand-skirting Loughadea Road. In this recess Christy and Ned McQuaide, Bernard Conroy, and Owen Kinsella had been working, and stopping to eat their breakfast out of coloured cotton handkerchiefs on unshapely seats of stone. Their bill of fare was simple, even to monotony, consisting of cold potatoes, and no particular incidents enlivened the meal saving the discovery that Bernard's handkerchief contained an exceptional hard-boiled egg, provided by Mrs. McQuaide's hospitable sense of what was due to a visitor. Its presence was declared by Bernard's cousins to afflict them with consuming jealousy, and Ned counterfeited the passion with melodramatic glares and grins, but dropped them sooner than he might have done if all the party had not been a little out of spirits; while Bernard happily disposed of the dainty by handing it over to Paddy Cuddihy, who had followed them from Port Maguire, toilsomely dogging the steps of his patron Christy.

They had just finished when Hanmer came by on his way to bathe, and stopped to pass the time of day. Also to tell them that the papers completing the sale of Sir Herbert's land would be signed to-morrow. The postponement of this transaction by Sir Herbert's illness had irked him sufficiently to suggest the thought that the other people concerned might like to hear there would be no further delay, but not enough to make him realise what serious anxiety it had caused. He was unaware, too, that sinister rumours respect-

ing Mr. Vittie had got about and co-operated with the evil auguries drawn from hope deferred. Most people did still believe, though not without trembling, but they daily found it harder effectively to repel the sarcasms of the sceptic. It was becoming a pain and grief to them to be asked whether they had got the seed-pitaties yet ready for their new fields, or to be informed that a single one might very belike have as many eyes in it as they would want after all. A few people had abandoned their faith, and replied to such rallying with mirthless self-mockery and laughter that rang false. "Themselves were the quare fools," they said. And they said, "Sure it would amuse you sometimes to hear the blathers and nonsense people did be talkin' and consaitin' you supposed there was e'er a word of truth in it all the while." The McQuaides and Owen Kinsella, having rather more knowledge of affairs, had not really desponded, nor even doubted, yet they could not wholly escape the effects of the general uneasiness and depression. Accordingly, Hanmer's communication was most welcome. Christy said it was a good hearing, and he was liefer of it than of his boat full of mackerel. Ned said, "To your sowl!" Bernard said, "Bedad, then, Sir Ben 'ill be pleased too." And Owen said, "More power! now there'll be chances in it." Paddy Cuddihy did not make any comment, but his happiness being ensured by the gift of a penny—it was clearly one of Paddy's luckiest days—Hanmer left behind him a cheerful company.

But when he returned with limp towels, scarcely half an hour afterwards, he found it broken up. Only Bernard was there, leaning against the rock wall, with a dejection so apparent as to convince Hanmer that one of the untoward things which may find such ample accommodation in the space of half an hour must have happened during his absence. "The others have gone home?" he said. "We had a bit of an accident," Bernard replied, and pointed in towards the back-ground of the little amphitheatre. There Hanmer saw lying a heap of livid, yellowish clay, with a great lump of dark boulder embedded in it, evidently newly fallen. "Anyone hurt?" Hanmer asked, rather shocked, for Bernard's dazed and downcast demeanour would have seemed consistent enough with a comrade or two crushed hopelessly underneath.

"Oh, not to speak of," said Bernard.

What had happened was this. Christy, resuming work, had ascended by a ladder to a ledge about fifteen feet up on the bulging wall of clay and rock, while the others remained dispersedly below. He had moved a yard or so along the ledge, when suddenly an ominous shaking and cracking in the bank beside and above him warned him to get out of that "with his safest haste." But the ladder was now beyond his reach, and a slide of earth on the left had already blocked the ledge between him and it. Ned, who was at some distance, saw the situation, and shouted to Bernard, "Shove him over the ladder." Bernard, who was much nearer to it, saw too, but at the same time became aware that he could not touch it without passing under a place where a great fall of earth was most obviously imminent, heralded by spurts of dust and pebbles dropping like bullets. Would he have hung back? Certainly it could not be said that he did. For at that moment Paddy Cuddihy, whom nobody would have credited with either the strength or the wit to do any such a thing, scrambled forward and pushed the ladder over to Christy. Failing to get it into a stable position, he steadied it at the foot, while Christy descended, shouting to him to "get away wid himself out of that." Paddy, however, stuck to the ladder, and the end of it was that they both were just in time to avoid the crashing down of the great boulder. It was an extremely narrow escape. Ned said he'd have been sorry to offer a brass bawbee for the pair of them that time. Hence it seemed a very lucky thing that their market value, whatever this might be, was after all not appreciably diminished. Paddy only was complaining a little of his back, and they thought he might have got a slight knock from a stone, or have strained himself a bit when he grabbed the ladder. So the other lads had brought him along to the O'Keefes' place, that was near by, where Biddy O'Keefe and her mother would see after him.

In these incidents, as related by Bernard, there was nothing to account for the depression of spirits which he could not dissemble, though he did conceal its cause. That lay in an incident which he did not relate. Perhaps, indeed,

it could hardly be called an incident, for it happened merely in his own mind, and was no more than a notion, a conjecture. Yet it seemed to him just then the central fact of his life. It was a horrible misgiving he had that he would not have gone to Christy's rescue, would not have run in under those loosening masses, even if poor Paddy had not anticipated him. The doubt had seized him on the spot, and it developed in the direction of certainty minute by minute, strengthening with the shudder that came over him, whenever he looked at the huge, earthy boulder, and recalled the roaring clatter of its fall, and wondered what would have been his fate if his body were now lying crushed beneath it. An awful one, he could not but forbode, caught so suddenly, without absolution, and surely not in a state of grace. He could not, it is true, imagine himself to have been committing any great sins; but a good conscience is of terribly little avail as encouragement for anyone who has learned to honour his Creator by regarding his own existence as in itself a foul offence worthy of illimitable fiery penalties. Then to imagine Christy the victim, an inevitable sequel, was almost worse; for he well knew that Christy had never been at all as attentive to his religious duties as he was himself; he did not feel by any means sure that Christy had been to confession since Easter twelvemonth. It *was* worse when he admitted the likelihood that to this doom, only for little Paddy Cuddihy, his cousin would have gone, while he basely stood by. Shame and grief were in that conviction, self-contempt and self-despair. In abject paroxysms he half envied the disabilities and immunities of poor Paddy, the "innicent," who had not been entrusted with the privilege of destroying his own soul. These thoughts were so glaringly conspicuous to himself that he felt as if they must be apparent to his companions, and therefore shrank out of their society, staying behind to mind the tools while they went to the O'Keefes'. All his self-confidence, never a plant of robust growth, seemed to have been shattered, and the catastrophe naturally recalled to him that far-off time, which had yet always remained within easy reach, when its very root had been stricken on the strand at Port Maguire.

"Sure, it's likely I am to be good for anything," he said to himself. "And I the death of me poor father."

It was this train of thought that Hanmer's reappearance interrupted, and hence the association of ideas was closer than might have been supposed when Bernard said, "Do you mind him that we saw in the trap, sir, at Bresk, and we comin' back from Glenore, and that you said was a Mr. Vittie? I hear them sayin' there is a man of that name stayin' now at Moygarna Lodge."

"I know there is," said Hanmer—"the same man."

"But he's Tim Galvin, sir, the thief I was tellin' you about," said Bernard. "As sure as I'm standin' on me feet, he is that villin."

"Have you seen him again?" said Hanmer.

"No, sir; I've tried more than once to get a sight of him, but I couldn't. I'll be apt to when he comes back; he's gone away for a couple of days on the yacht. Himself it is right enough. Somethin' clumsier he looked to be grown, but he was fat that time too, and it's the quare size he'd have to put on him before he'd outgrow my recollections—the God-forgotten young fool I was—I'd know him again if I saw him drivin' along wid the Lord Mayor of Dublin—divil a bit of me could be mistook."

Bernard's object in making these assertions was less to convince Hanmer than to get his own thoughts away from that ghastly, clay-encrusted, big lump of a stone; but now another diversion presented itself. From Loughadea ways an outside-car with two men on it came driving by, and pulled up to ask for directions to Mr. Hanmer, of Daly's Cottage. "He's wantin' in a hurry over at our place," one of the men said to Bernard.

"The cottage is a bit round the corner, and Mr. Hanmer's here," said Bernard. And the man thereupon handed Mr. Hanmer a note. Bernard heard him say, "By Jove!" in a concerned tone as he read it, and then to the driver, "I'll go back with you, but I must call at home first." Then he got on the car, and it drove off, turning up the lane which led to Daly's Cottage. It had been a very short time out of sight, when round the corner of the lane Delia came running, so flushed and breathless that Bernard was sure she had heard

some sensational rumour of the accident, and was sped by a false alarm. But she seemed to disregard his reassuring signals, and her first words were, "Oh, Bernard, do you know was that Mr. Hanmer on the car?"

"If you're just after meetin' it in the boreen, it was," Bernard replied.

"Then," said Delia, "it's too late I am; I'm afraid of me life—unless you could be stoppin' him anyway. And there's our chance of the land gone to loss; they'll be puttin' the sheep on it again, and the boys may go on dhrowndin' themselves in the storms out of the ould boat. And what they'll be doin' to poor Mr. Hanmer wherever they've took him off to, the dear knows. They had talk last night about a bottle of poison."

It took Delia some time to explain fully her reasons for apprehending all these calamities, and she was obliged to repeat her explanation, as Owen Kinsella and her cousin Ned returned at the end of it, Christy having stayed at the O'Keefes'. As the flurry of her rapid walking and hoping and fearing subsided, she collected her wits, and gave a circumstantial and coherent narrative of her adventure at Prospect View House. Bernard was disposed to make light of the matter, partly because the reaction after his late excitement had begun to set in, leaving his mind inert and unimpressionable; and partly because it seemed to him intrinsically a rather improbable thing that any important discovery should be attained by just his sister Delia. He said sure she might easily be mistaken about what she overheard them saying, or even about what people she saw, since she said herself that the light was getting so dark. And besides that, what was to hinder the Considines of selling their land to sheep-farmers, or whoever they liked, without Mr. Archer troubling himself to carry off everybody else that happened to have made them an offer for it? There was no sense in it, in his opinion. Ned McQuaide took a totally different view of the case. He attached the greatest weight to all Delia's statements, and in fact confused and impeded her at times by his tendency to insist that she had seen and heard more than she was relating. He shocked her, too, by the inferences that he confidently drew from her story. "There

could be no manner of doubt," he declared, "that these people were intending to do away with poor Mr. Hanmer. To poison him, by all accounts; for what else could they mean by talking of giving him the full of a bottle of prussic acid—well, of taking it along with them, which was all the one thing? It was stuff that he himself had seen a weeny drop of kill a cat in a half-quarter of an instant minute. The outrageous miscreants and thieves of the world!" Carried away by wrath, he actually proposed that they should tell the police, a monstrous suggestion which was vehemently decried by everybody, and attributed to evil propensities acquired during his water-bailiff days. However, he speedily recognised its impropriety, and substituted for it a recommendation to consult Christy.

While the other three were still debating in the quarry, Owen Kinsella slipped quietly away. The state of affairs appeared to him seriously urgent, and he had formed a plan which must be executed without delay, and on which he would fare best without companions. He aimed at following the car to its destination. His first step was to call at Daly's Cottage, where he arrived some minutes belated, and could learn from old Winny Corry only that "the master had dhruv off at a great rate to go see Dr. Moloney, who was took bad suddint: she couldn't tell in what place he was. Och! the poor man; she remimbered when he used to be livin' in that identical house." But Owen had no trouble in tracing the party through the village, and out on the long, straight stretch of the Loughadea Road. And here by a double piece of good luck he was loaned a lift in Pather Mack's cross mule cart, and the cross mule saw fit to run away wildly, so that it "tattered them into Loughadea in next to no time," with the surprisingly few casualties of one driven-over chicken and many hair-breadth escapes. At Loughadea the cart stopped, but he ascertained not only that the car had passed, but that it was belonging to Dr. Gregory—"him that kep' the mad-house, a good step away along the road towards the Lough—Saville House, he called it." Owen knew the place, and also knew a short cut thither across the bog, on which he trotted so expeditiously that when he reached Dr. Gregory's gate, the car was briefly

visible, just vanishing up the avenue. Wishing, nevertheless, to confirm his certainty, he waited for a short while, and then went up to the house, where a weather-beaten, greenish door was opened to his knock by a slatternly maid. "Could I see Mr. Hanmer?" he inquired.

"This isn't Mr. Hanmer's place at all," she replied.

"Sure, aren't you just after gettin' in a new patient?" said Owen.

"And supposin' we were?" said the maid.

"It's him I'm wishful to be seein'," said Owen.

"Well to goodness! Yourself's the bright lad if you think the likes of you's to be seein' the patients new or ould—set you up!" the maid said, looking at the handsome and audacious stranger with an appreciation which led her to prolong the interview by adding, "And the doctors and the Jay Pay expected every minyit for to sign the certificate."

"Dr. Moloney's in it already," said Owen.

"The big man wid the grey beard from Kilcashel?" said the maid, leaning her dishevelled head against the edge of the door, as if well inclined to settle down into a comfortable gossip. But a shrill voice from within called peremptory injunctions to Maggie to shut the door, and come out of that; so Owen retreated, feeling that the colloquy had not been entirely fruitless.

Sitting under a hawthorn bush in view of the gate, he soon witnessed the arrival of a gig containing a person whom Owen characterised as "a little ould rip of a shoneen, that had put a dhrop too much in his cup of tay"; and who in about half an hour drove away again. He was presently followed by the invalid Dr. Moloney with another man in a dog-cart; but Mr. Hanmer did not reappear.

Then Owen made the convenient discovery that the occupants of the gate-lodge were Burkes, "first cousins to the Fergus Hanlons, at Kilcashel, and very dacint people." So from them he obtained some useful particulars about the Saville House establishment, and a promise that word would be sent him if anything was seen of the gentleman whom Dinny Keogh had driven over that morning on the car. This was an advantage, as Owen wished anxiously to take every precaution against the possibility of "only

foolin' the lads for nothin'"; though in his own mind he felt little doubt or none about where the gentleman would be to be found. He might now go about his business as fast as he liked, which was as fast as ever he could; for although the afternoon was still early, a great deal remained to be done. He had not been idle during his watch under the hawthorn bush. His plan had developed into details quicker than the pearl-bead buds above his head were breaking into blossom. And a kindling hope sunned them all. "The dirty naygurs!" he said to himself, as he looked through meshes of translucent sprays out across the wide, purple-brown bog; "I'm thinkin' they won't conthrive this time to scare the people off the bit of green land." Then he turned to where the discoloured white house gleamed bleakly behind its thin screen of half-clad trees, and went on thinking: That it looked to be a dreary sort of old place, fit only to drive anybody demented that got shut up in it; that there were a deal more dreary places in the world than anybody wanted; and that there might be a deal fewer if people knew the worth of a grain of sense. "But one thing at a time," he concluded, starting swiftly on his way, "as the weasel said when he put the ould hin off of sittin' on a dozen of eggs."

CHAPTER VII

THE night that fell on Kilcashel was a very quiet one, so far as the seas, and the skies, and the cloud-and-wave-compelling winds were concerned in keeping the peace. For the moon's serene shining was subject to only fleeting dimnesses, as if of a breath melted on a mirror; the tides along the strand stole in and out as silently as bare feet, and in the fields bushes and trees stood as still as if they were really "branch charmed by the frost," that was counterfeited here and there where soft white blossoms sprinkled and powdered them. Nevertheless, through all this tranquillity went a stir. Round about Kilcashel for many a long mile there was an unwonted coming and going. Slipping across bits of bog, skyting down boreens, cantering on wild little garrons, and plodding steadily in ass-carts, fared singly and in devious directions a constantly augmented number of persons, chiefly youths and gossoons. One purpose had started them all on their various errands, as one touch sets twenty balls rolling; and as the impact was rapidly transmitted, the circle spread, swiftly widening from its centre. Even at a place so far off as Glenore the word went round, and was responded to with a promptitude that made it of effect, distance notwithstanding. When the first glimmers of dawn were flushing into clearness, a bird's-eye view of the district would have shown that from every quarter of it there was a converging movement in progress. Young and able-bodied men in very small parties of two or three, or oftener one by one, were making for a certain point simultaneously, and, it might have been observed, in an unostentatious manner, avoiding coalescence into larger bodies, and taking the least-frequented routes. Only from some such general view, therefore, could any unusual

proceedings become apparent. Ordinary wayfarers, who might happen to be a police-patrol, would of course see nothing remarkable in meeting Joe and Tony Murphy tramping along moon-silvered Pike's lane, or in catching a glimpse of young Shawn O'Byrne legging it over the tussocky bog-land beyond Lough Orane, just as the sun swung up a bucketful of fiery light from behind the purple wall of Slieve Mealin.

This had occurred not more than a couple of hours ago, when Owen Kinsella reached the place where he expected by-and-by to meet some of his friends. It was a corner of the big Derrycoshmore bog, known as Forty Furzes, and landmarked by the rising up of a grassy esker, whose green banks were conspicuous for height and hue on the expanse of the sombre level surrounding them. Owen sat down at the foot of a swarded slope, under one of the tall, winter-blooming furzes, which now bore only a few golden flakes, but was hung with an elfin fabric of iridescent gossamer and dew all over its spiny dark leafage. The fine, short grass-blades had among them many a delicate small flower, and the long sunbeams made one jewel of the cup and the clear drop it held. There was in Owen's mood something corresponding to the fresh brightness of the spring morning. His eagerness shone and sparkled visibly, as it used to do a dozen years ago when he listened large-eyed to old Shawn O'Reilly talking on Port Maguire strand. Though he sat perfectly still, he did not look as if he were doing nothing. Owen had spent the night in what he would himself have described as "runnin' about like a dog at a fair." Back to Kilcashel and to and fro between it and its far-scattered neighbours he had sped, to arrange and direct, and by energy make amends as much as might be for the brevity of his notice. And the result of his labours was that he seemed to have come nearer than ever before to a practical realisation of his dearest hope. He felt as if he were about to get hold of a thin thread that, like the thread in the fable, would enable him to pull up thicker lines and thicker, until at last he had possession of a rope strong enough to end an adventurous prisoner's captivity. "It's the best chance I've seen yet,"

he said to himself, reviewing the situation in this not unwelcome pause, while he waited for his lieutenant, Ned McQuaide, to join him. "Better, by way of a beginnin', than fightin' the water-bailiffs would ha' been. Because, for one thing, it hangs together more all of a piece; the whole of it'll be just straight fornint them, so that sorra a mistake can there be whatever about how it was done. And, for another thing, it's to put a stop to a worse bit of villiny than there was in interferin' wid the fishin'. To take and lock a man up in a mad-house for the sake of preventin' him of doin' a hand's turn to put some sort of fairity into things—och, now, but that was the black bad job. The lads had a right to be plased over the chance of risin' up and desthroyin' it, like an ould spider's dirty cobweb. And so they will, bedad, wid a heart and a half. But then, after they've seen for themselves that way what they can do when they make their minds up to hold together, and stand by one another like reasonable crathurs, in place of scrabblin' about to scratch up the dirt, one here and one there, like a set of ould hins, that's pokin' and peckin' separat ever, unless when half a dozen of them's thryin' to swally the same bit—it 'ill be quare if the lads don't git some sinsible notions into their heads. Ay, will they, and more than only these few. You couldn't tell but before so very long they might be stirrin' themselves all over the counthry some fine night, as if they was the waves comin' to shore out of the say, and as little like to miss of gettin' to where they would be goin' agin the sun risin'. And that same 'ud be the great mornin' to get a sight of—it would so."

Owen's vision rounded itself off naturally with a touch of regret. "Ah, they'll soon be here now," he thought, as he beheld Ned McQuaide coming over the hillock; and he added, "I wish in me heart ould Shawn himself was along wid us yet to be seein' them."

The appearance of Ned might have reminded him of another less inevitable regret, for he would have preferred the company, and the discretion, of Ned's brother. Circumstances, however, had made it expedient that Christy should stay near Kilcashel, in command of a small party to whom

were entrusted a post the importance of which was considerable, though the duties promised to be rather dull. So Christy sacrificed his inclinations, and wistfully saw his friends off to the scene of more excitement than could be supposed likely to result from his commission, which was to keep a sharp look-out for the return of the *Flamingo* yacht with Mr. Vittie on board, and a close watch on the subsequent movements of that gentleman. The *Flamingo* was not expected quite so soon, but the precaution seemed necessary in view of the possibility that the "fat, foxy-haired shoneen might be slinkin' off to Shanabawn, and grabbin' the grass-lands while their backs were turned." In case of such an emergency, Owen was to be summoned in all haste, while Christy took what measures he could. Bernard Conroy secretly believed that he could cope with it in a way of his own. However, it was a very remote contingency.

At one moment things had looked much as if Ned McQuaide would have no part at all in the enterprise, let alone a distinguished post at Owen's right hand. It happened thus. Owen had called late at the McQuaides' house, and was rapidly discussing ways and means with several of the neighbours. Among the persons present were Delia Conroy, who, in her anxiety, had begged a night out on the plea that "she was wantin' herself at home," and her cousin Ned, who had just brought in a creel of turf, and was stacking the sods in a recess beside the hearth. The wing of the firelight was fluttering but feebly through the kitchen, which had no other illumination, and Owen did not notice Ned in the background among the flickering shadows. But Ned, finding no remarks addressed to him, and being made sensitive by a consciousness that his lapse into official life must have left him somewhat damaged in his friends' esteem, with much chagrin believed himself to be purposely excluded from the council. Delia, sitting by observant, had the fine wit to discern the mute signs of this misconception. She saw Ned glance with a dull look of mortification from his cap and stick to the door. In another moment she knew he might be slipping away without a word, and so would miss everything, and

get vexed with everybody—in fact, there was no end to the unlucky consequences she could forebode. So she took heart of grace, and “she up and spoke” to Ned suddenly out of her corner: “Och, Ned,” she said, “*Ned*, is that one of thim ugly dowlduffs creepin’ on the wall over your head? Or is it only the shadow dancin’ wid itself, or what is it Ned?” Whereupon, as she had hoped, Owen turned round and said, “Whethen now, is it there you are, man? I didn’t know you were in it at all, and was wonderin’ what was gone wid you. I’m thinkin’ it’s wid us you’ll have to be comin’ along.”

It may be that Ned, on his part, had some fineish wit which helped him to perceive and appreciate this stratagem. At any rate, an hour later, when he was about to start, he took occasion to say to its author as they stood by the door, “Well now, Delia, supposin’ we have any sort of good luck wid this job, and supposin’ one of these days I come by a dacent little place to be thatchin’ for meself, it’s not very far I’d have to be runnin’ over the parish, Delia asthore, to find the girl I’d be lief to see standin’ in the door, and I steppin’ home wid meself—standin’ the way you are this minyit, Delia alanna.”

“Will I be sendin’ word, then, to Biddy O’Keefe?” said Delia, very innocently indeed.

“Murderer alive! what talk at all have you of *Biddy O’Keefe*?” said Ned. “Sure now, it’s yourself’s the great little rogue of the world to be talkin’ of Biddy O’Keefe. She’s a quare set-up one. Bedad, the cock of her chin would frighten the crows.”

The smile with which Delia could venture to receive this disclaimer seemed to be reflected on Bernard’s face as he stood rather dejectedly within hearing.

But now, when he arrived at the rendezvous on Derry-coshmore, Ned, as Owen was glad to see, came in a frame of mind appropriate to the critical occasion. He showed none of the tendencies that had been causing Owen some misgiving about him. For Ned undoubtedly had a taste for sensation, which sometimes led him to indulge in what his neighbours call figureandyn’, and more cultured persons posing, or betrayed him into “making a song” of matters

not advisable to noise abroad, or into otherwise sacrificing solid good to dramatic effect. Happily this morning he had discarded all such vanities, and had addressed himself without flourishes to the business in hand.

As much might be said for by far the greater proportion of the young men who soon afterwards began to walk in among the furze-clumps, coming in knots of two or three at a time, until the number assembled was estimated by Ned as "the full of a very sizable little fair." "And be the same token," he added, "the prices that 'ill be goin' this day may happen to astonish some people before they're a great deal oulder." Their like are to be seen at any country fair in the almanac—youths, often tall and long of limb, apt to be either black or ruddy-locked, clad in homespuns, more or less time-worn, with caps to match, or broad-brimmed black hats, quaintly clerical in fashion, varied by even queerer caubeens. But at fairs these faces, despite their youth, very commonly wear the listless and harassed expression that bespeaks a dearth of present hope and aim, with a background of cares glooming heavily all round the horizon; whereas here they were eager and forward-looking, as if on the threshold of some congenial activity, the anticipation of which brightened one's eyes and tightened the grasp of one's blackthorn. And almost the first thing that Owen Kinsella did when the muster seemed complete was to announce that the blackthorns must be relinquished. "Long sorry I'd be to say a word agin them," he declared; "there's nothin' handier to have a hould of many a time, and many a time 'ill happen yit. But I wouldn't take one to stir me cup of tay wid, and sorra a bit more will we want them for this job. There's plinty of ourselves widout any talk of sticks. And it's a dale the best plan to do wid as little of anythin' else as we can." So the blackthorns, some scores of them, were piled without demur behind a screen of mingled furze and fuchsia, and Owen proceeded briefly to recapitulate the main points of former instructions. "We'll come to the gate a thrifle better than a quarter of a mile down the road, and the house 'ill be straight fornint us at the ind of the avenue, that's not many perches long. So up to the front door we'll step, all except Ned McQuaide and the lads he's in charge of, that 'ill

take a turn round the house, to see nobody's comin' out of it at the back. And into it we'll walk, quiet and dacint, mind you. They'll open the door likely enough, but anyhow, 'twill be only a matter of a couple of kicks, for they're rubbishy dale boards. There's about three or four fellers in it, besides the doctor and a couple of other misfort'nit crathurs he has keepin', that are no affair of ours this time, goodness 'may pity them. So very belike we'll find himself and his chaps in the hall, and there they'll stop along wid some of us, uncommon quiet and paiceable, while the others do be slippin' upstairs or downstairs to fetch Mr. Hanmer out of wherever they may have him hidden. Above in the attics the lodge-woman said they were apt to ha' put him. But mind yous, lads, quiet and paiceable, I said. If them ones has any talk out of them, it 'ill be for their own divarsion, and no bother to us. Faix now, 'twould be a rael scandal if we couldn't do a simple little thing like that widout risin' a whille-loo over it. We'd a right to flow in and out of the house like a wave of the say, supposin' it was a wave that had the wit to be carryin' off just whatever it come for along wid it, and nothin' else."

"But see me here, Owen man," said one Mick Logan from Kilcashel. "Suppose it's worse work than hidin' him away they've been 'after wid Mr. Hanmer? Accordin' to somethin' I heard, there was a notion of poisonin' him; and ready enough they'd be, if they got the chance, the way they done wid Owen Roe. And what are we to do then? Is it paiceable and quiet we're to come away wid nothin' at all?"

"Musha now, Mick Logan," replied Owen. "Is it nothin' at all you'd call it to ha' let the daylight in on their black villiny? Troth I would not. But anyhow, we needn't be delayin' here to talk about what we'd do wid them, for we'd ha' got them safe, the way we could consider as long as we liked. And divil a fear that we'll find they've hurted a hair of his head, yit at all events. For themselves 'ud be in no such hurry aither, and it's not any great while we're goin' to lave them for their schamin'. So quiet and paiceable, and quick about it, is the word for you, Mick, and the whole of us."

"Sure then you'll see me fetchin' him out as cautious as if it was a fly I would be fetchin' out of me eye," said Mick, and everybody seemed to acquiesce in the resolve. A very few minutes later the whole band stood drawn up on the road which ran just at the back of the little hill, and with their faces towards Saville House waited for the order. Owen wished more than ever for the presence among them of old Shawn O'Reilly.

Sitting alone up in a high little room, only a few furlongs away, Ulick Hanmer did not by any means divine that help had drawn so near. On the contrary, he felt as if his hopes of obtaining any were momentarily receding. He tried to believe that this must be only because he was still amazed and bewildered by the suddenly monstrous aspect of his affairs. When he grew more collected he would certainly see his way. He reminded himself reassuringly that it was scarcely four-and-twenty hours since he was swimming in the brisk and sunny waters of Kilcashel Bay. A strong effort of imagination was needed to realise the fact, for an immense tract of time appeared to separate him from the moment when, into the middle of his talk with Bernard Conroy at the stone-pit, the car had rattled, bringing him news of his brother-in-law's alarming seizure, and an urgent summons to visit him without delay. Then had followed the long drive to Saville House, where he was received in the hall by Dr. Gregory with an obvious constraint and embarrassment of demeanour that might well have been supposed to betoken worse tidings than he wished to tell. And the next minute Hanmer had found himself in a dingy dining-room, where among several strange faces he recognised that of Dr. Moloney, to all appearances unaccountably enjoying excellent health. To his further surprise, his inquiries about the reported illness occasioned an interchange of significant nods and nudges, head-shakings and shoulder-shruggings among all present, accompanied by loud asides, which referred to a new hallucination and a melancholy case. He was rather slow in grasping the situation, but by degrees he did become aware that he was being rapidly transformed in the eye of the law into a person of unsound mind, incapable of managing

his own affairs, and requiring to be placed under restraint. He learned that he had more than once attempted to take his life by poison ; that he was often incoherent and rambling in his speech, and in consequence of his eccentricities was known in his neighbourhood as " the cracked gentleman " ; that he had come over from London afflicted with brain disease, which an eminent specialist had pronounced certain to end either in blindness or insanity ; and that his malady might be presumed hereditary, as it had prevailed among his relatives, his mother's sister in particular having for many years laboured under the delusion that she was Marie Antoinette, and insisted upon holding bedchamber levees in the manner of that ill-fated sovereign's period.

In all probability what Hanmer urged against these statements was impartially considered of fully equal weight with them, but the preparation of the M.D.'s and J.P.'s certificate went on unretarded by any such irrelevancies. The only delay was caused by the non-appearance of Mr. Peter Varley, who came a few minutes late. However, he would not permit any time to be wasted in the repetition of evidence, but without more ado affixed the requisite signature. It was an excessively tremulous one ; so much so, indeed, that his friend Wilkins remarked, " Be the hokey, you old sinner, I wonder you got it to stand steady on the bloomin' bit of paper at all. You'd better be keepin' an eye on it, or it might stagger off yet, before the ink's dry." With this jest the business was completed, and the party broke up, seeming anxious to get away, and tarrying only for a little hurried whisky drinking. Hanmer had begun to feel as if the whole thing were a bad joke in a worse dream. He was really for the time being as helpless as among the irresistibly accumulating horrors of a nightmare. Fight and flight were alike impossible ; he was one against five or six vigilant guards. Therefore he presently allowed himself to be conducted to his room. They took him up a great many steep and straight stairs, unlocking and locking more than one door by the way, until they came to a long dark passage, with rooms on one side. It narrowed wedge-like towards the end, so that you felt as if you walked into a contracting chamber ; and midway, on the right hand, one little barred

window looked out and down into a high-walled enclosure, filled with nettles, except where they were smothered temporarily under recent formations of rubbish-heap. The small room they gave him lay huddled under the roof, the slopes of which deformed it into the shape of a distorted tent or wigwam. Instead of a window it had at the highest point of the low ceiling a skimpy skylight, lavishly barred and wired, with panes of muffed glass, which made day a perpetual dusk. Walls and ceiling were papered with stripes of broad pink and white, which flared through the dimness, wherever they did not hang off damp-stained in mouldering tatters. The carpetless floor spread grimly, and fireless was the rusty black grate. There was nothing else in the chamber at all more inviting to contemplation than these things, which might perhaps be considered advantageous as enabling the occupant to bestow undivided attention upon the devising of means for departure thence with the utmost possible despatch.

But though Hanmer did very strictly meditate this subject all day long, night fell upon him still groping and baffled. An obvious means, of course, was epistolary communication with his friends; but, unhappily, no less obvious seemed the certainty that he could, and the extreme probability that he would, be completely cut off from it. Notwithstanding, he obtained writing materials, supplied with suspicious alacrity, and wrote several letters in haste, all the while foreboding that in the pen between his fingers he was futilely clutching a straw; and after the envelopes had been taken away feeling hardly more hopeful about the result than if he had actually seen them posted in the red heart of the nearest fire. Another expedient naturally suggested itself in this connection. He might bribe the attendants. As ill-luck would have it, he had come away in his hurry almost penniless, and without his watch, so that promises were all he could offer. However, they might serve his purpose; might even, perhaps, do so more efficaciously than the exhibition of ready money, since their fulfilment would hinge upon his release being procured. Accordingly when, towards evening, some doleful sort of meal was brought to him by a stout, grizzle-bearded man, he introduced an allusion to the resources that were at his

disposal when he was at liberty. But the response was not encouraging. The man's face broadened as he heard, with the smile of a superior whose pleasure it is to humour and soothe, and he replied affably in his sing-song southern brogue, touched with a transatlantic twang, "Why certainly, sir. I do suppose you've got a considerable pile—some. You gents are a surprisin' cashy lot, by jiggers! The gentleman was livin' in this identical apartment before you, not so long ago, had somethin' like a fortin' if he could ha' come by his rights. A million a minute it was, no less. Just you stretch your mind to that, sir—a million quid every minute of the bloomin' day and night. Tottin' it up he was constant. You might see some rows of his figures on the wall—there, back of the door. In fac', before he took his last bad turn wid the bronchitis, what wid the compound interest that was comin' due to him, and the rest of the etceteras he was always reckonin' of, he'd got it raised up to pretty well double as much again, accordin' to his own calcarlations. He was a balmy one too, poor Mr. Million-a-minute. But I couldn't say he was a very off-handed gentleman, sir. The divil recaive the red cent of his money any of us ever seen the colour of—not the price of an ounce of Irish twist—though he might have had that amount along wid him anyway. And so you've got the millions too, sir, outside? Well, now, some folks has the luck, and some folks has the wit; and they say it's better to be lucky than wise. I wish you joy of it, sir."

These felicitations often returned to taunt Hanmer during the night, which extended itself for him almost at full length with few unconscious moments to curtail it. By way of literature, that second-best shelter from care, he had a Book of Common Prayer, in a mildewed black woollen cover, and an old volume of *Handy Andy*, works from neither of which did he derive any solace. When his long-lagging sleep took its leave all too early, he felt as if he had waked up somehow inscrutably entangled among the meshes of a fate-spun web, and the wider he waked the stronger the feeling grew.

Nothing of importance happened on the brief march

that brought Owen Kinsella's party to the gate of Saville House. The only person they met on the road was an old man with a sack and a sickle, cutting grass along the banks. He was in a dry ditch at the moment, and watched the approach of all these young men with his head a little above the rim.

"Is it the hurley?" he said, as Owen passed. "By the powers"—with an envious expression—"yous 'ill have a great game."

"Great it 'ill be, and a game it 'ill be, plase goodness," Owen said, accepting the omen, without committing himself to the hurley. And when they had gone by old John Foyle fell to wondering could it be any sort of a holiday that he had forgotten and was working on. Such an oversight seemed to him blameworthy and regrettable, for he was rather a lazy old man. So he gave himself the benefit of the doubt, and sat down and smoked a pipe in the sun.

At the entrance gate the lodge-woman and her family surveyed the troop with some awe at its imposing largeness. She was sincerely grateful to Owen for diverting her gossoon Thady's desire to join it by stationing him on sentry-duty at the gate, a commission which Thady undertook with stalk and strut of pride. Up at the house the hall door was opened spontaneously by the curiosity, quite unalarmed, which had descried their orderly and inexplicable invasion. Dr. Gregory, who, for what appeared to him sufficient reasons, was uneasy in his mind that morning, heard the sound, and peering nervously out of his study into the hall, at first sight felt relieved, for those peasant lads standing in the doorway were by no means the visitors he had been dreading. When, however, these same lads walked unbidden into the hall, and were followed by others in an apparently endless stream, until it ceased for want of space, and when the tall youth who seemed to be at the head of affairs stepped up to him and said, "We've come to fetch home Mr. Hanmer out of this," Dr. Gregory felt that his fears were, after all, going to be realised in a somewhat unexpected form. He made a feeble attempt first at denial and then at protest. There was no such person in the house. He could not allow the afflicted

patients under his charge to be disturbed and alarmed. But Owen simply replied, "There's not goin' to be any talk. One of those men 'ill show us where he is." Two of Dr. Gregory's employés were still in the hall, like him engulfed by the tide that quietly closed in round them. The third had made a bolt for the back door, where he rushed up against a passively resisting barrier, that said to him, in the persuasive voice of Ned McQuaide, "Sure not at all. It's keepin' the roof over your head you'll be yet awhile. Take it aisy, me hayro. Divil a taste of a hurry there is outside." Owen now beckoned to the ex-keeper of Mr. Million-a-minute, who was immediately expressed from a crowded corner and several steps up the stairs. He judged it advisable to put a good face on the matter, and so began an amicable conversation as they mounted, but Owen said, "Ah, whist!" after which he led the way in silence. Down below Owen heard the room left by his following escort being promptly filled up from without.

It was a trying crisis for Dr. Gregory, whose habits were inactive and virtues unheroic. During the first moments of it he said to himself that if he escaped unhurt out of the power of this ruffianly gang, he would certainly have thanks returned for his deliverance in his brother's tabernacle, and would, if unavoidable, devote to a thankoffering part of the large fee by which he had been fool enough to be tempted into such a predicament. But as he became aware that the throng which had so inexplicably gathered round him did not intend to offer him any personal violence, he abandoned the notion of thanks, even unaccompanied by a testimonial, and began to see the incident in other and less providential aspects.

Never before had Ulick Hanmer so rejoiced at the sight of a fellow-creature's face as he did when Owen Kinsella's suddenly appeared to him where he sat by the side of his tumbled bed, idly miserable and vainly raging, amid the shadows of his hideous little cell. He had heard footsteps in the passage, but without expectation of anything better than breakfast, and hence his joy was emphasised by a shock of delightful surprise when the tall, grey-clad youth

strode in as suddenly as a breeze blowing past, and said, "Glory be to goodness, your Honour, here's yourself as fit as a fiddler! It's stepped over a good few of us are to fetch you out of this dirty ould dog-hole. Sure now, wasn't it the lucky job that little Delia Conroy by chance heard them villins away at Kilcashel colloquin' over the schame they had for to be enticin' your Honour into this place wid their lies, and lockin' you up, to hinder you of gettin' a hold of the bit of land? 'Deed yis, your Honour, that was their plan, and Dr. Moloney at the forefront of it, and young Mr. Considine; faix now, I wouldn't have thought it of aither of them. But 'twasn't a thing we were goin' to put up wid. We weren't very long follyin' after you, were we, your Honour? And there's Dan O'Meara's car waitin' for you now at the gate to be bringin' you home, and two or three of the lads 'ill be along wid you, in case there was any divilment on the way. But bedad 'twill be a long while before they're apt to thry those thricks again, after seein' that there's plenty of people in the county Mayo at all events, who'll make it their business to set their faces agin any such bad work." Owen's comrades assented to his opinion with unanimous *ay bedads, troth won't they's, faith will we's*, and other sympathetic ejaculations. As for Hanmer, his sentiments led him to shake hands all round. To this day he has not lost his liking for the peaty odour that came into his room along with his deliverers, all whose garments smelt of turf-smoke out of the white-walled, amber-roofed little houses, where the clear blue vapour plume perpetually quivers and melts into widest air over the bit of thatch under the dome of heaven.

They lost no time in descending into the hall, where a tendency to receive them with *hurroos* and *more powers* was repressed in deference to a sign from Owen. Passing close by where Dr. Gregory stood, densely surrounded by his visitors, and briefly assuring him that he would soon hear more of this affair, a promise which the doctor felt too much dispirited to acknowledge, Hanmer, with a small party, walked down the avenue, through strangely fresh air, and extraordinarily brilliant sunshine. It was proposed, he found, that his escort on the car should include Ned

McQuaide, an arrangement effected by Owen discreetly enough, for under the stress of success Ned's spirits were beginning to rise in a manner that might have made him a dangerous element among a large number of his kind. Isolated on the car, the jokes and capers that might have laid a train to a mischievous explosion, became merely harmless squibs and crackers. Owen explained that he must himself stay to see the boys safely out of the house, and scattered on their homeward ways. "And I'd liefer they wouldn't be delayin'," he said to Hanmer. "For, you see, sir, we've done the only job we had on hands for this time; and the longer they're bidin' together wid ne'er a bit of work to pacify them, the liker they are to be doin' somethin' onraisonable. Next time, wid a blessin', we might thry somethin' bigger; however, this wasn't too bad for a beginnin'. And if we get the fire raked out, so to spake, widout any botherations, it's a lucky day we'll have had altogether." Hanmer agreed to this and also to Owen's next remark, namely, "And 'twas a lucky thing we didn't meet one of them police-patrols comin' along. We could ha' left a few of the lads to mind them, aisy enough, in coorse, if we had, but 'twould ha' been a delay, and apt to rise a ruction wid no sinse in it." Hanmer's views upon some points connected with law and order had been considerably modified by the events of the past four-and-twenty hours.

When the car had driven off, Owen did have the satisfaction of accomplishing his purpose. The wave flowed smoothly out again, with no eddy or roughness of any sort, and so expeditiously that the whole invasion of the premises had lasted hardly longer than a visit of ceremony between sovereigns, or the call of a loquacious vanman. As the footsteps died away, Dr. Gregory was urgently dissuading the duller-witted members of his household from the folly of rushing open-mouthed with the tidings to the nearest police station. It seemed to him much to be desired that the outrage should remain unreported.

At Forty Furzes, where the blackthorns were picked up again, dew sparkled still on leaves of trefoil and thyme and ground ivy, and the gossamer webs had not lost yet one diamond bead. Everybody was elated by the consciousness

of a task successfully finished, yet a little regretful that no more of it remained to be done; and the time of life and time of year put a spirit of youth in everything, which made activity an end in itself, even if it led to no more than superfluous jumps over dykes and bog-holes. Fortunately everybody's homeward way gave abundant scope for these. Owen went about among the departing groups and drew the moral of the morning's event. This was mainly to the effect that "if they knew what they were intendin' to do, and stuck to it, and stood by one another, there'd be plinty more bad work they might put a stop to. Not so aisy, maybe, as the job they were just after doin', but 'twould be worth the throuble. Ay, bedad would it, the way there might be a dale fewer people wakin' up on the likes of such a grand mornin' and wishin' it was the black night again, by raison of the dreary little places they had to be livin' on, or the bit of food they were wantin' in the long day, or the say carryin' off their friends to the wrong side of it, unless it swallied them up entirely. But then you see, lads," he would continue, "if we got contindin' about separat things for ourselves, instead of what we were all of us agreed on, it's just only losin' our chances we'd be of doin' a hand's turn for anybody at all. Wastin' of them we'd be, like as if we took for divarsion and spilt about the dhrink in the middle of the road, that the crathur lyin' down wid the fever was cravin' for all the while inside the door. And that 'ud be a sinful pity." Most of the persons addressed gave a cordial assent to his views, seeming disposed to make a practical application of them, and as he watched from the grassy ridge the dispersion of his followers, he felt fairly confident about their future proceedings. "If they fight a bit friendly on the way goin' home," he reflected, "sure 'twill be no great harm." Yet while he thus moralised and admonished he was himself thrilling with a new and strong sensation. This was the first time he had tested on a large scale his influence over a mass of men. He found that he could control their movements magnet-wise. The proof of possessing such a power is an experience that either sobers or intoxicates, according to the ingredients wherewith it mingles in the mind. The conclusion to which it brought Owen Kinsella,

who sat in meditation for some time before he turned homeward was, "I wish to goodness I had a dale more sinse."

Now, although in its recession from Saville House that intelligent wave seemed to have borne off with it nothing save what it had come specially in quest of, it was really the cause of removing thence something more. For several long weeks sojourning there had been a small, elderly woman, with faded red hair and china-blue eyes that daily rolled more unsteadily. She was in charge of an impassive-looking middle-aged spinster, who knitted grey woollen socks without ceasing, and for recreation listened at the same time to conversation in the kitchen. The demented old woman generally accompanied her on these occasions, it being all one to her where she sat muttering and moping and cursing her bad son, and she had done so at the time when the rescue party arrived. By the general rush, gabbling, into the hall, which followed its withdrawal, the kitchen was left deserted, and the roving light blue eyes saw an opportunity. In a trice their owner had plucked the cook's violet and green plaid shawl down from behind the door, and wrapped up therein was slipping away by secluded paths, along dykes and hedges, with the cunning and swiftness of her class. She completely eluded observation, and soon found herself out on the wide, lonesome bog-land, which she began to cross, making straight for the distant glimmer, dim and silvery, of the sea. After a while she became aware of something familiar in her surroundings, for she had reached a corner of the bog which she had traversed many a time as a short cut in the old days, when she used to be taking a long tramp with a lying story all the way from Port Maguire to fetch home her fraudulently-gained pension. Guided half by instinct and half by memory, she now took the route towards Port Maguire. Freedom and change, and movement through the soft air and cheerful sunshine, had in some degree soothed and rationalised her; but she was still an odd and out-of-the-way figure, with a long beflounced skirt trailing recklessly, and a jerky gait, and a wildly wisped-on shawl. A little girl whom she met near a wayside cabin, and into whose face she peered, was so startled by the sharp, staring eyes that she fled precipitately indoors, and reported to her mother the passage of

"an ugly-lookin' ould madwoman." Her mother said, "Ah, now, Rose, you shouldn't be callin' names to the poor ould crathur!" But she added, "You couldn't tell but you might be goin' about that way yourself one of these days," a contingency so unimaginably remote in Rose's judgment that the reason rather weakened the precept, an effect not very rarely produced by reasons.

CHAPTER VIII

THE saints be among us! Preserve us alive, Mrs. Galvin, and is it yourself?" Mrs. McQuaide said. "Whethen now, I declare to goodness, ma'am, you put me heart across. Sorra a bit of me knew you agin the first minyit. Well, well, well, it's little notion I had who it was I seen comin' along the street. And how's yourself this great while, ma'am—and Timothy?"

Mrs. McQuaide was standing at her door in the sunset light, much as she had done on the day of her Conroy cousins' arrival; but this evening she had not been expecting anybody in particular, least of all the neighbour of whom nothing had been heard at Port Maguire since her abrupt and slightly regretted departure more than half a score years ago. Though these had left Mrs. McQuaide only a trifle stouter and more weather-beaten, they had altered Mrs. Galvin sufficiently to make small blame to anybody who failed to recognise her. She had, however, considerably modified the "quareness" of her aspect since her flight from Saville House that morning. For before she quitted the lonely bog, she had discarded the long, trailing skirt, which she really did not require, as the black moreen petticoat she wore beneath it would be considered a garment entirely grand among the people to whose customs she was reverting. Once more she was to aim at the character of a respectable Protestant woman. The skirt she rolled into a bundle and carried bulging under her shawl, also for the sake of appearances, because she was aware that an arrival quite empty-handed always created a bad impression.

This return of course sent a ripple of excitement up and down the Row. Not that Mrs. Galvin had ever been a

highly esteemed neighbour. But absence had faded her social delinquencies, and she was now an object of curiosity rather than reminiscence. As a teller of traveller's tales, however, she was found decidedly disappointing. Her account of her own career was confused and vague, and in reply to all inquiries about her son Timothy, she merely reiterated a bald statement that he was a bad one. This, coupled with the flightiness of her manner, and wildness of her look, caused significant glances to pass between the listeners to her rambling talk. She accepted with avidity the refreshment offered to her at more than one door, but she would not hear of spending the night under any roof except that of her former dwelling. It stood empty and half ruinous. For a short time after the Vitties' flitting it had been occupied by one Tom Gorham, who was presently drowned on his way over to the English harvest-making, and his successors were so much annoyed by his habit of looking in at dusk, that they soon removed themselves, and no other tenants came.

Mrs. Galvin, having effected a forcible entrance, scrambling over the rickety half-door, slept, on a shaking of rushes and straw, longer and better than she had done for many a night. Next morning she was early astir, and out on the strand, where she fell in with some of the neighbours, to whom she now related a story quite thrilling enough to atone for her reticence on the previous evening. In a sudden spasm of confidence, she gave them—they were Mrs. McQuaide and her sister-in-law, with the Widdy Egan and Sally O'Keefe, who were all collecting scallops and mussels to eke out scanty supplies—a full account of how her son "had got the pouch full of money off the little spalpeen that he found hidin' it away over yonder among the seaweedy stones; pounds and pounds untold was in it, and it the property of the sick man that was dyin' at Mrs. McQuaide's. Every pinny of it Timothy had grabbed, and bedad whatever Tim laid his greasy fingers on stuck to them fast enough. Divil a brass bawbee was she ever the better of thim." Some other deviations from strict accuracy occurred in her narrative, as when, for instance, she represented herself to have "gone on her bended knees to

Timothy, times and again, beggin' and prayin' of him not to be robbin' of the infant orphan child." Her whole story, however, both fact and fiction, seemed to her audience highly incredible, and was received with frank expressions of doubt. Mrs. McQuaide declared that she didn't see how there could be an atom of truth in it at all; for sure if there was, it's telling them the poor child would have been, what else would he be like to do? But sorra word he ever said about any such a thing, from that good day to this. Thereupon Mrs. Galvin, with more veracity than consistency, replied, "And how would he go tellin', after me puttin' him on his oath to hould his tongue, the way I had him afeard of his life and sowl to be spakin' out?" Then she twitched Mrs. McQuaide along by a shawl-corner to and through her adjacent doorway, and from out of a crevice between mud floor and wall poked with a long razor-shell the greyish leather pouch, discoloured, creased, and empty, but still easily recognisable as the lost property of poor Nicholas Conroy, whose initials appeared on the flap.

At this proof positive Mrs. McQuaide said, "Well to be sure! the wickedness there is in some people would surprise the bastes of the field, let alone the birds of the air. Troth now, the flesh creeps on me bones to think it was lyin' there all this while, wid every ha'penny gone out of it clane and cliver, like some sort of a skileton. Poor Nicholas—God be good to him! Where's Christy? he'd a right to know about it—and Bernard."

"They was away over to Kilcashel last night, about some business, I dunno rightly what," said Ally, her sister-in-law. "But Bernard, at all events, 'ill surely be here some time in the day, for he's goin' back this evenin' to Glenore."

"Would you believe, now, he'd ha' took and done such a thing?" said Mrs. McQuaide. "Robbin' of his poor father, and I wid the notion ever he was an uncommon, good, quiet child. I declare the more a body thinks one thing, the more it turns into another."

"'Deed it's many a time I did be wonderin' to see him so mopin' and fretted like," said Ally. "Sure the crathur was to be pitied wid that throuble on his mind all the while,

tormentin' him in the best days of his life. Greatly to be pitied he was, if only we'd known. But sure there's scarce a crathur in this world that one mightn't pity if one had the sinse. And now I'll run in and take a look after Paddy."

For the last two days Paddy Cuddihy had been an inmate of the McQuaides' house, whither Christy had conveyed him upon finding that he seemed more seriously injured by his accident up at the quarry than they had at first supposed. "Not a bit of use he has at all in his limbs now, that never had much, the dear knows," Mrs. McQuaide reported to Mrs. Cuddihy, "and says he's not hurted whatever; but that's the worst sign could be on him. Sure losin' your feelin' is next door to losin' your life, for the two of thim's partly the one thing."

"Wait till we get the docther to him," said Mrs. Cuddihy, whose feeling about this unlucky husband's brother was not unmixed with remorse, and who thought to herself that if he got on his feet again he should have a less niggard share in the better times which were understood to be coming. But the prevalent belief was that, doctor or no doctor, Paddy's span was finished, and that among the boulders and seaweed he would be seen no more swinging himself about like a disabled grasshopper. "He must ha' done himself a mischief liftin' up the heavy ladder," people said; and those who had befriended him most added, "'Twas little enough anybody could do for the crathur." But Ally McQuaide, who was one of these, said, "Ah, sure, maybe he done the best thing for himself, wid the help of God, as well as he done for Christy. Rael annoyed Christy is over it; he always had a great wish for poor little ould Paddy."

Doctor Moloney, as we have seen, had other professional duties to attend to on the day of the accident; and on the next he received a shock of surprise, which was even more preoccupying and preclusive of distant red-ticket calls. It happened during luncheon, when Cyril casually mentioned how they had just met that booby, Uncle Ulick, driving on Dan O'Meara's car. The doctor's family knew nothing of what was going on, having only an indefinite impression that he had become more hopeful about things in

general, and they were therefore astounded to find Cyril's statement vehemently contradicted, with as much indignation as if he had announced the ominous movement of a wood. And they continued to grow increasingly puzzled, as upon Cyril being corroborated by his sisters, their father got up in evident perturbation, and hurried out of the room. So away on the shingle spit of Port Maguire a medical opinion was waited for in vain.

This grave condition of Paddy was one of the things that helped to depress Bernard's spirits as towards Port Maguire he walked along the sea-road in the mistily sunny morning. Yesterday he had been more cheerful, because exciting events were in progress. There had been some distraction in expecting news from Mr. Hanmer's liberators, and more in looking out for the arrival of the *Flamingo* yacht, which would disembark Mr. Vittie, whom he persistently identified with Tim Galvin, the thievish wrecker of his peace of mind. Bernard felt that if once he could confront the well-remembered large white face, he would not fail of wreaking fierce vengeance by word and deed for the unassuageable misery of long years. He would have beaten it down amid a fiery hail of blows and curses. But the *Flamingo* never appeared, and as the weather had now turned hazy she was no longer expected immediately. Thus, thwarted and baffled, his flame of rage had died down, ineffectually, leaving for ashes a guilty sense of murderous intent. Another hope of recent growth did indeed remain for him to reflect upon. He was pleased to perceive that his cousin Ned had given up a short-lived fancy for Biddy O'Keefe, and had come to an understanding with Delia. For Bernard had lately surmised that Delia was thinking of Ned, and that Christy was thinking of Biddy, but hanging back to let Ned have his chance. It was well, no doubt, that these complications should be happily ended ; still, he knew rather than felt that it was so. The matter did not touch him closely enough to interpose between himself and his intimate consciousness of miserable failures. From the last and most humiliating of them, that moment of hesitation in the stone-quarry, he found it all the less possible to detach his thoughts, because he had to pass by the place

on his way to Port Maguire, where he would hear how Paddy was. That, and what had led to it, lay uppermost in his mind as he walked along, with, on his left hand, the sea, to whose margin the path by-and-by descended. He crossed some curved stretches of clear, silvery sand, on which the tide was creeping up very quietly, blue, softly, and dimly, with outlines drawn like the petals of wild roses and poppies. At one point the smoothness of a wide and shallow mother-o'-pearl saucer tempted him to stop a minute and make ducks and drakes. But though the flat pebble, dexterously poised and propelled, went skimming on a successful career, springing away in a long series of bounds, till their end was scarcely to be descried far out amid the haze, Bernard derived no gratification from his little feat. "Sure you may lep and lep," he said, looking gloomily after the vaulting pebble. "It's all one how long you keep it up; to the bottom you'll go first or last." Naturally he refrained from drawing the obvious moral of his moral—that the pebble was apparently quite as well at the bottom as anywhere else—and he resumed his walk in the same disconsolate mood.

It brought him round the next turn in sight of Port Maguire strand, where the row of shaggy roofs looked as if they might have been tossed up only a little more roughly along with the clattering shingle-banks and weedy boulders, and where the children were as usual running and yelling among the malodorous garbage and oozy pools. Some of their elders were visible standing still about doorways. As Bernard had left the place overnight, before the arrival of Mrs. Galvin-Vittie, he would never have guessed that she was included in one of those groups. Ever since she had revealed the hiding-place of the stolen pouch, she had been talking at large, in a wild and rambling way, that strengthened everybody's impression of her "quareness." In Mrs. McQuaide it wrought a belief that although her production of the pouch proved the truth of part of her story, all that related to Bernard was merely crazed lying, a distorted version, perhaps, of a fiction prepared long ago to meet possible emergencies. So now, seeing his approach, Mrs. McQuaide beckoned him up to the door and addressed

him with much confidence. "Well, Bernard, me child, who do you suppose we've got here? Ould Mrs. Galvin, that used to be livin' next door to the Egans ten or a dozen years back. But she's the quarest talk out of her at all; for she says it was her rogue of a son—the fat, foxy-haired fellow—stole your poor father's money. And that's true enough, for they had the pouch hidden away in the wall of their house all this while—just look at it, sonny." She thrust it into his hand. "But she declares, black and white, that it was you Tim took the pouch off, and yourself after thievin' it out of the house here, and runnin' out wid it to be hidin' it down yonder among the big stones. And sure that's as big a lie as ever anybody tould in this world. For what would bewitch you to be doin' such an outrageous thing, wid your poor father took for his death, and you not the size of an atomy, and never openin' your lips about it to a mortal sowl? There's ne'er a word of truth in it, child alive?"

Before Bernard could answer, out of the knot of by-standing men and women, thrust itself the sharp, sandy-hued, cross-eyed face, whose image was so distinct in his memory. "It's himself, sure enough, grown a bit, I remimber the scared eyes of him. And how would he be openin' his lips?" said Mrs. Galvin. "Wasn't it afraid of his life and sowl I had him, after puttin' him on his oath to hould his tongue?"

"Ay did you, you ould she-devil—and I wish to God it had choked the two of us," Bernard said, coming out of his amazement in a flash of passion. Then flinging the pouch on the ground, he rushed away over the shingles, and down to the water's edge, where he sat out of sight among the boulders, with his head stooped, and his hands to his ears. "They'll all be cacklin' over it now, like the full of a fowl-creel," he said to himself, with a disproportionate bitterness, as if this trivial circumstance were really an important factor in the sum of his woes.

While his mother thus lapsed into low company, Mr. Timothy Vittie was frequenting very high society indeed. Several days past he had spent on board the Dunstanleighs' fine steam-yacht *Flamingo*, which was cruising on the west

Irish coast. And Miss Leila Roche was of the party. How this had come about may be extracted from a letter sent to Miss Roche at Barnaglen by her sister, Ethel Dunstanleigh. The Dunstanleighs were much smarter people than the Ball-Simpsons, and the letter gave its counsels in an authoritative tone. Part of it ran : "It was an awful sell being hauled back from the Mediterranean by this inconvenient old uncle's pneumonia—in such weather too ; no wonder I got tied by the leg with sciatica and pleurisy—had a horrid time. The worst of that was that Dunstanleigh took it into his head to have the *Flamingo's* saloon upholstered while I was laid up, and must needs consult his odious sister Gertrude Tyacke, who, to do her justice, is the greatest screw that ever breathed ; and she has gone and persuaded him to have it done in some vile sort of plum-coloured, cotton-backed plush, that's twopence-halfpenny cheaper than decent stuff, and sets every tooth in your head on edge whenever you lay your eyes on it. However, I shall be even with her ladyship, for I know she counts upon my taking her gawk of an eldest girl off her hands on our autumn cruise—and don't she wish I may? But now we're going to take a stroll along the coast in your part of the world, to freshen me up a bit before we settle down in town. You are to come around with us, so we will pick you up at Kilcashel. Reason why, because we are to pick up a friend of yours there too, Tim Vittie, the margarine millionaire. From what Mabel tells me, it is evident that you would be an immense idiot to let him slip, and you don't seem to be getting any forrarder ; but there is nothing handier than a life on the ocean wave for bringing such affairs to a crisis. In these days, when the oof-bird is so wild and wary, it won't do, my dear, to kick up your heels at a good thing just because it mayn't be all that your fancy painted. So don't let us have any airs and graces ; I will bring you a couple of decent frocks from Ernestine's in case you are in rags, and you can remember me when you come into your pin-money. I am sometimes short enough, I can tell you."

With these injunctions Leila complied, less against the grain than her sister had apprehended, and a consequence was that at the time when Port Maguire's residents were

listening with deep interest to the curious reminiscences of "ould Mrs. Galvin," her son Timothy, not far off as the gull flies, was flattering himself with a belief in the favourable impression his pretty speeches made upon Miss Roche, as they sat together in a sheltered recess on deck. To this post of duty Leila had been called by the vigilance of her sister from a conversation more to her mind with a rather delightful young private secretary, when they had talked for barely ten minutes in half-sentences four words long, and she was just beginning to feel like the heroine in the newest novels. Ethel, however, considered that the recreation had lasted long enough, and Leila was obliged to acquiesce.

To her relief luncheon at length came laggingly. The more general conversation into which she then escaped turned at first upon conjectures about the probability of the *Flamingo's* being able to keep her engagement for that afternoon at Moygarna Lodge, where an At Home was taking place in her honour. A drifting fog had made it seem very doubtful all the morning that the threading of intricate water-ways could be prudently attempted, but towards noon the white haze had fined down its texture from stout sheeting to most diaphanous lawn, and the prevalent opinion was that the yacht might proceed cautiously on her appointed course. When this had been discussed for some time, Mr. Vittie changed the subject by producing the design of his grandparents' memorial window, which he spread out widely across the table, between dishes of bananas and grapes, and upon the details of which he consulted Miss Roche, with ostentatious deference to her judgment, and assumption of their conjoint interest in the matter. Hence arose talk about memorials in general, tombs, epitaphs, and the like, and old Colonel Welwood related an anecdote. In a country churchyard he had once seen a headstone inscribed: "*To the memory of Anne Williams this monument is erected by her sorrowing Husband, at a cost of £4 14s. 8d.*" Most of his hearers said, "Good," or laughed, but they fell short of Mr. Vittie's magnanimity. For he looked round on them half-reprovingly and said, "Oh, come now, Colonel, I daresay one could find many a poor devil besides him, who thinks there's a lot of money inside of a five-pound note. How-

ever," he went on, turning to Miss Roche, and patting the plump angel in the design, "This here'll be a very different affair. No fear that ~~we~~ need be ashamed to put the price. It'll look right enough. Into three figures it'll run, at all events."

Leila could not help seeing the private secretary's grin broadening behind his claret glass, and for the moment she wished for a cyclone, a fire, an explosion—anything that would create a diversion violently. But such incidents seldom occur exactly when they are wanted, and she was as much alarmed as anybody else when a few minutes afterwards there did come a grating shock, which spilt the wine in some full glasses, and made everyone exclaim, "What's that?"

To those who rushed up on deck it speedily appeared that they were aground. The fact was that the *Flamingo*, having taken a wrong turn when rounding Inish Duff, had strayed in among the Herringbones, and run herself up against a sandy bar, on which she would be obliged to await the return of the ebbing tide. Such a trial of patience was not, however, entailed upon all her passengers. The mishap had befallen them within a short row of Port Maguire, and it was at once suggested that they should proceed thither. Some demur was raised, on the grounds that the tide would not allow them to get back, but these objections were overruled by Ethel Dunstanleigh. She said that it was not good form to disappoint people, and she supposed the natives would be frightfully sold if none of them turned up. Accordingly a boat party was mustered in haste, lest the water should fall too low, and as most people wished to go on shore, two boats were filled. In the first voyaged Mr. Vittie with his hostess, and her sister; also an elderly but vivacious Lady Fanny Jervis, and the private secretary. It was followed by the other conveying Colonel and Mrs. Welwood, with Effie Marston and Lloyd Dunlop, two lively young persons, who beguiled the way by making animadversions with perilous distinctness upon Mr. Vittie, their tastes having led them to agree in an unfavourable estimate of his character.

As for Mr. Vittie himself, it was not until he had actually

embarked that he bethought him of possible awkwardnesses attending his return to Port Maguire. What if he were recognised? How about that affair of the pouch? Suppose something had come out to make known his part in the matter? The brat of a spalpeen might have talked. But all that seemed so immeasurably remote. He could hardly imagine the establishment of any connection, even in his own mind, between the ragged Tim Galvin, loafing penniless, and sometimes pitatyleless, about a cabin door, and this present Timothy Vittie, Esquire, more than millionaire, spick and span in raven black and dove-colour, with silk hat and costliest jewellery, seated amidst a bevy of peers' daughters, delicately appareled, one of whose lacey, silver-handled sunshades had been entrusted to his pearl-grey kid hand. Even the Timothy who had risen to the dignity of weighing out bacon, on profitable scales, in a blue bib, was not easily to be identified with his dazzling successor. Nevertheless, as the green boat slid steadily straight shoreward, and Port Maguire emerged into detailed distinctness, with the sun shining on its huddled cabin row and refuse-littered strand, the memory of those old, incredible days came back to him with confusing clearness, which caused him to feel as if an untimely dream had mixed itself up in his wide-awake hours. Dreams were rare and unusually rather unpleasant experiences to Timothy, and this one made him dull and absent-minded, so that he was embarrassed when he found himself giving random answers to some of his companions' remarks. The private secretary thought at first that he was nervous about boating.

At Port Maguire the approach of these visitors was little observed. The *Flamingo* being nearly invisible among the mists, her mishap had escaped notice, and high, shrill voices sounding over the water was the earliest intimation that "strange Quality" were about to arrive. Their smooth, brief passage was made without incident almost to the end. But then the boatmen of the first boat, unacquainted with the peculiarities of the beach, tried to land at a place so ill chosen that they fixed their keel upon a snaggy ledge of rock several yards from the shingle, and with a boulder-bounded creek of water on either hand, deep enough very

thoroughly to duck anybody who disembarked in it. This blunder threatened some annoying delay, but apparently nothing worse, as the still ebbing tide would, in any case, presently leave them high and dry. So the boatmen poled and pushed, and their mistress grumbled, and the private secretary reminded her soothingly that whether or no she would have had to wait until some sort of vehicle could be found. And while this was going on, there came to Timothy Vittie's ears a sound which made him feel as if his dream had turned into a terrible truth.

For close by, from a flat-ledged, brownly-draped rock just across the right-hand channel, which was not more than a couple of arm-lengths in width, a too familiar voice suddenly hailed him: "Och, Timothy Vittie, so there you are yourself! And is it your poor ould mother you're comin' to see? Sure I was wonderin' when you would be comin' agin. But, bedad, I wouldn't blame you if you was ashamed of your life to be showin' your face here, after the rogue's trick you played the last time you was in it—robbin' the orphan child—troth I would not."

Timothy looked—everybody looked—and saw a small, oldish woman, with a pallid, sandily-framed face, wrapped in a violet and green plaid shawl, over a short black skirt. She was making her way down to the extreme edge of the low rocks, shuffling over the slippery seaweed on unstockinged feet thrust into large, wrinkled men's boots, full of holes. "It's a mane sort of a son you always were to me, Tim Vittie, for all your robbin' and thievin' and riches," she said.

"What on earth is she talking about, and who in the world can she be?" demanded Mr. Vittie's hostess.

"Oh, I'm sure I can't say—I don't know her at all. She's got away—she must be after giving them the slip out of the asylum—somewhere, somehow. I mean she must be mad," Timothy said, failing very signally to conceal his dismay.

"Oh, well enough you can say, me man, none betther, if you'd any fancy to be spakin' the truth," said his mother, sharp of ear. "But there's no need for you to be sayin' anythin' and tellin' people what you can't hinder them of

seein', if they've got e'er an eye in their head. For you and me was always as like as a couple of dabs, until you grew as fat as a pig wid sittin' outside the door up yonder the len'th of the day doin' nothin' except aitin' all before you. Nobody's apt to mistake us that sees the two of us together."

There was considerable foundation for this statement, as, notwithstanding their contrasting meagreness and embonpoint, features, and colouring, and manner of speech showed a similarity that made up a more than family likeness between mother and son. Mrs. Galvin, however, called further witness. By this time several of the neighbours had crossed the shingle to see what was going on, and to them, as they stood in a knot behind her, she made appeal: "Look you there, Mrs. Egan, ma'am. D'you see him, Dinny Clery? Isn't himself me son Timothy, if he was fifty fine gintlemin? Sure ye mind when him and me was livin' in the little house up there, next door to the Egans and the Widdy Moriarty, ten or a dozen years back; and kep' the few hins—and he had me heart scalded with aitin' up of their eggs on me, and niver doin' a hand's turn to help wid the bit of pitaty ground or aught, whin me back did be broke carryin' up the creels of sayweed and turf. Many's the time you yourself has passed a remark on it to me, Mrs. Egan—and look at him now, woman, just for pity's sake look at him sittin' there wid a face the size of a full moon on him, and lettin' on it's the ladies he's belonging to—if you plase—instead of meself."

Loud whispers running through the hard-staring group behind her were quite audible. "Ay, bedad; it's himself right enough. I mind the gob of him well. Whisht, bad manners to you, they'll hear you. And supposin' they did itself? I was sayin' no harm. Och to goodness now, and is that Timothy Galvin?" This was Mrs. MacSheehan, who, being hard of hearing, spoke louder than she knew. "'Deed then, and so it is. Many's the farrel of griddle-bread he's got off me in them ould days. For when he got the smell of it bakin', and he slingein' about outside, in at our door he'd be stickin' his red head, by way of axin' was there anythin' burnin'. And after that he'd stop looking at it out

of the corners of his little eyes, till he had me ashamed to not be givin' him a bit. Musha, but it's the quare world. Look at the hat he has on him, and a pair of gloves. Ould Tim Galvin's son ! ”

“ Callin' himself Vittie he is these times,” said Mrs. Galvin. “ But that's only the name he took off of our poor cousin Tom Vittie, who owned the little shop up at Martinstown, where we set ourselves up in the grocery business, after me gentleman there run away out of this wid the money he robbed the little brat of. The full of that he had,” Mrs. Galvin said, whisking forth from under her shawl the grey leather pouch, an object at which her son gazed as helplessly as if it had held the Medusa's head. “ But it's all one— Vittie or Galvin. Ould Nick and the Lord 'ill find him out between them, no fear, when they want him, if he called himself Nebuchadnezar-Elishatishbit, so I do be tellin' him.”

The boat hearkened in almost complete silence, broken only once by the private secretary, who inquired jocosely whether anybody was going to adopt *him* as any sort of relation. No one else spoke, except Lady Fanny, who said, “ *How* very extraordinary ! ” and whose keen, brown eyes seemed to her vis-à-vis to be twinkling through and through him. Miss Roche was counting the buttons on the boat cushions. Her sister looked alarmed. It was Timothy Vittie's turn to wish for convulsions of nature, but nothing happened more abnormal than the leisurely rippling out of the tide, which fell by slow, slow inches, as if no hurry were the order of the universe.

Meanwhile the second boat, warned by the fate of its predecessor, had selected a more judicious landing-place near at hand, and its occupants now came along the shingly rim to condole with their imprisoned friends. Naturally they entered into conversation with the other onlookers, and very soon Mr. Vittie enjoyed the gratifying sight of his mother and gossipy old Colonel Welwood engaged in an animated discourse, which was carried on just beyond ear-shot, but the theme of which he could conjecture with horrible certainty. His guesses grew more disagreeable when he by-and-by saw the whole party, headed by Mrs.

Galvin and the Colonel, move off up the beach towards the home of his youth, through the dark doorway of which they all disappeared. He shuddered to imagine what pages of his family history were being turned within.

However, detention at Port Maguire came to an end for the tongue-tied party in the boat as well as for the loquacious one that was being shown over the Galvin-Vitties' former residence. The tide ebbed sufficiently, and at the same time the boatmen, who had been sent in quest of conveyances, returned, having succeeded in securing the loan of Father Deasy's car and another met on its way back from Bresk fair. It seemed to Timothy that he might now get away at least without any fresh encounters with old acquaintances. But when they were just starting, opposite the McQuaide's door, out of it Bernard Conroy chanced to come, and Mrs. Galvin, who was among the bystanders, forthwith darted upon him, and seizing him by the arm, pointed him to Timothy, who already sat wedged between the Lady Fanny and the Colonel. She said, "Look you there, me lad. Isn't that the chap made you give him up your poor father's pouch full of money, the time he found you wid it below on the strand, and you looking to see how much was in it, or somethin'? Isn't it himself?"

Bernard looked and recognised. It was the meeting he had longed for only yesterday, but it had not come in time to find yesterday's mood. To-day his fierceness was quenched by a melancholy drawn from various sources, and the flame could not be rekindled in a moment, not even by the proximity of the long-detested, well-remembered face. He had spent the afternoon in the room where Paddy Cuddihy lay dying, they said, having been "took wid a wakeness" so serious that Christy had run to fetch the priest, while Mrs. McQuaide and Ally and the Widdy Farren were praying hard and fast for mercy on the departing soul. Bernard had joined in their devotions for a time, until, restless with fear that spiritual help would come too late, he went out to see if there were any signs of it on the road. His frame of mind being thus attuned to despondency and remorse rather than resentment, he answered in a tone that expressed resigned disgust as much as indignation, and was perhaps

more convincing than one of more violence would have been. "Tim Galvin it is," he said; "the same that thieved the purse from me when I was a small chap. But what use is talk about it now? Me poor father's gone, and it's all one to me who has the money. Yourself and that dirty rogue on the car might as well keep it as not. The divil help yous wid the spendin' of it, that's all I say; and may yous be remimberin' the bad way yous come by it when you're settin' off to his own place." With this valediction sounding in his ears, Timothy Vittie quitted Port Maguire.

Still, untoward as had been the incidents brought on by his visit, he soon rallied from his first discomfiture, and was not inclined to make very much of them. Awkward they were, no doubt, but it was not to be supposed that anybody would mind the romancings of a demented old loony, wrapped up in a rag of a shawl the same as any old beggar-woman—a likely-looking mother for *him*. And if Miss Roche took a less rational view of the affair, why, he could "scorn and let her go." Mr. Vittie expressed himself differently, his reading in the poets not being extensive. After all, there were plenty as good as she to be had for the asking. However, he preferred to keep her, if possible, and it seemed to him that his best prospect of doing so lay in putting a bold face on the matter. Before leaving the yacht he had obtained a promise that he should drive her back in the Dawsons' polo cart; so as the time approached for departure from the Lodge, he sought her among the guests, and failing to find her, sent a messenger to ask when she would be ready to start.

Leila Roche was really more deeply affected than he by the events of the afternoon. On the drive from Port Maguire her companions had been Mrs. Welwood and Lloyd Dunlop, whose comments upon what had occurred caused her grave anxiety and chagrin. All her plans and resolves were disarranged in a manner that was made especially inconvenient by her conviction that Mr. Vittie hovered upon the verge of speaking out. Under these circumstances it seemed to her expedient that she should avoid him until she had an opportunity for reconsidering the situation, and taking counsel

with her sister, and she consequently had recourse to a bad headache as a plea for remaining in solitude upstairs.

Thither towards the end of the entertainment came Griselda Considine with inquiries and offers of tea, and so chanced to be present when Mr. Vittie's message was delivered. It caused Leila Roche what struck Griselda as unaccountable perplexity and embarrassment, and she seemed unable to arrive at a decision. But at length she whispered to Griselda, "My dear, I wonder *would* you mind, like an angel, going down and explaining to Mr. Vittie yourself? You see, if I send word by the servants, they may make some stupid mistake. Tell him my headache is so *very* bad that I'm awfully sorry, but I don't quite know at present when, or how, I shall be going back. I'd be most awfully obliged to you. The maid says he's waiting in the hall."

Mr. Vittie, who was sitting alone in the porch when Griselda came down, jumped up and got as far as "Well, my dear, better late than never—" before he discovered his blunder. She executed her commission from an icy distance, and with exceeding despatch. It was her first impression of Mr. Vittie, and on her way upstairs she speculated as to whether he had meant his greeting for the maid or for Miss Roche.

"You told him I had a dreadful headache?" Leila inquired, made rather uneasy by her emissary's preternaturally swift return.

"Oh yes," said Griselda. And then she suddenly added, "But if I were you, I really think I would have had the *plague*."

In after days Leila used always to speak of Griselda as "an odious girl."

However, Miss Roche did not have the plague. On the contrary, after an interview with her sister, her headache got so much better that a drive in the fresh air was thought a most probable cure; and Mr. Vittie drove; and they successfully reached their destination. Next morning at breakfast on board the *Flamingo*, Ethel Dunstanleigh took occasion to remark to some of her guests, "Poor Mr. Vittie"—he had not yet appeared—"was quite upset yesterday by his falling in with that cracked old woman at Port Maguire. It seems

she is an old servant of his mother's, who went out of her mind and had to be put into an asylum. She has now been let come home to her own people, rather foolishly, for she evidently isn't fit to be at large. Mr. Vittie told me he was really so shocked to see her in such a state. He had been much attached to her."

"It is much to his credit, of course," said Mrs. Welwood.

"I must say I do really think he is a very nice fellow," her hostess admitted, with an engaging air of candour.

In fact, all Mr. Vittie's affairs, with one exception, were prospering highly; and even that sole exception might be regarded as a useful lesson to a man of his calling. For his abortive attempt to become the purchaser of Sir Herbert Considine's land was perhaps the only occasion in his career on which he had been actuated by other than strictly business principles when getting and spending were concerned. A merely sentimental grievance and personal grudge had lain at the bottom of his wish to outbid Ulick Hanmer, so that his failure might well seem to convey a salutary warning against indulgence in impracticable whims. And part of his object, the propitiation of Miss Roche, was now achieved independently, a circumstance which could be set to balance the miscarriage of his scheme for spiting Hanmer. Still, a failure it was, as he learned that morning from Archer Considine, whom he met when driving over to investigate the cause of his mother's most inopportune withdrawal of herself from Dr. Gregory's supervision.

That other ex-patient, Ulick Hanmer, had time to think over many things on his long drive to Daly's Cottage from Saville House. Among the first of his reflections was one to the effect that only for the prompt and vigorous steps taken by Owen Kinsella and company, his fate might have been a sojourn, much longer than he liked to imagine, in that pink-and-white-striped attic, which he has since then revisited unwillingly in many an ugly dream. It was easy to see how swiftly the meshes of an entangling net, the strands of a stifling web, might have been multiplied around him, so that every day would have risen upon a more hopeless and helpless captive. From that he went on to consider Owen's account of the plot by which he had been trapped,

and the motives of the plotters. In addition to these, he could not avoid conjecturing designs upon his property on the part of the Moloneys, though his turn of mind led him to concern himself more with a less pettily sordid element in the affair, a class-feeling of hostility to the proposed transfer of the land. The outcome of his meditations, however, was a resolve to consult his lawyer, Mr. Leslie, of Loughadea, and he proceeded to do so without delay.

About the same time Dr. Moloney and Mr. Archer Considine were likewise engaged in obtaining legal opinions, but found them of an extremely disquieting nature. Their dismay at Hanmer's unexpected reappearance had been heightened by the discovery that Dr. Gregory had immediately afterwards made an abrupt flitting from his residence without leaving any address or fixing any date for his return. That he should have judged it necessary to take such a precipitate step, seemed an alarming omen to Dr. Moloney and Mr. Archer Considine, and also to Mr. Vittie, who met them near Saville House, where, as we know, he had occasion to call. But *he* gave God thanks that he had taken good care not to be in any way mixed up in the matter, at least in the eye of the law, and retired to the *Flamingo*, leaving them to their own devices.

Ulick Hanmer, on his way to Shanabawn House a day or two later, had every intention of calling the confederates Moloney and Considine to account for their actions in a way which, he understood, would entail upon them exceedingly disagreeable consequences. It cannot be denied that he looked forward to this with a certain amount of satisfaction. The beating down of baffling foes, who have conspired with approximate success against one's existence as a rational being, is a duty to one's self that seems likely to be performed with thoroughness and alacrity when opportunity offers. His business at Shanabawn was to complete the land purchase, and Mr. Leslie, Sir Herbert's solicitor, had preceded him thither. Mr. Leslie, who had inherited a family friendship with the Considines, was very sincerely distressed by the exploits of Archer which had come to his knowledge, threatening as they did to involve that enterprising youth in a ruinous disgrace. He hesitated about disclosing the state

of affairs to Sir Herbert in his precarious convalescence, but he discussed it long and seriously with Lady Considine and her daughter. The worst part of it all, he agreed with them, was the shock to Sir Herbert, which there seemed to be no possibility of preventing, or more than briefly averting.

When he had gone into the library, Griselda sat on by the drawing-room window, and looked out vacantly over the lawn, where daffodils were dancing. She was shut up in misery, amid the spring sunshine, as a bird is shut up in a cage. And soon hers was invaded by a panic of terror, such as sets the caged bird fluttering with a futile flurry against the bars, when a cat steals slinking into view. For she saw Ulick Hanmer walking up to the house, and felt certain that he was come to tell her father terrible news. But she was as helpless as the silly captive, whose flutter is quite ineffectual, unless, indeed, some rare chance present a broken wire, or an unfastened door. As Hanmer was being ushered through the hall to the library, there confronted him suddenly a rather small-statured girl, whose eyes were shining, apparently with fright, and whose dark ruffled hair might have been supposed to be standing sympathetically on end. She was not one of the few people whom he knew by sight, but he afterwards conjectured her to be the daughter of the house, because she said, "My brother's *dreadful*, but if you told my father it would kill him!" The door was just opening, which obliged her to be brief; and Hanmer had to speak within even narrower time-limits. "I won't," was all he had time to say; however, he kept his promise no less scrupulously than if he had given it with more protestations.

And then, on his return home, waiting for him in the study was his half-sister, the most disconsolate woman in Ireland, and, he had good reason to believe, entirely innocent of any complicity in her husband's misdeeds. What was Hanmer to do? What he ultimately did was to make a compromise. No legal proceedings were taken, but Dr. Moloney ceased to practise as a medical man, and departed with his family to carry on fruit farming in Florida. The funds for this new start in life were in part supplied by Hanmer, who also undertook to provide an

education for Gertrude and Cyril, the niece and nephew who showed most traces of intelligence. It was a sequel to their uncle's enrichment widely different from their anticipations, and certainly less brilliant; still, on the whole, the young Moloneys were inclined to think it a change for the better. As for Archer Considine, at this time he conveniently developed a wish to try his luck in far away northern regions, where golden eggs lie hidden under the brooding goose-wing of the snow, and as, after paying his debts, the resources of his family still sufficed to equip him for the expedition, he set off, in high feather, to found his fortune, saying farewell amid general regrets, and promises of nuggets scattered in profusion.

But these movements of their betters aroused much less interest among the neighbours at Kilcashel and Port Maguire than some more trivial-seeming incidents that were happening simultaneously. Quite a strong sensation, for instance, was created one May morning, simply by the sight of Christy McQuaide and his brother setting about the digging of a trench for a surface drain in a green sloping field, just where the road turns off to Port Maguire. It was a very green field, undulating with the traces of ancient furrows, long grassed over, and where the spade turned up a sod, the soil looked dark and rich. "Och, but that's the rael good stuff," commented the people, who were watching round about, much as if races, or hurley, or something equally exciting were in progress. For here was the McQuaides' new holding, where Christy hoped to have his little house built "agin he and Biddy O'Keefe got married after Michaelmas"; and the work actually begun was a sign of the better times coming that carried conviction to all. Everybody rejoiced thereat; even the sceptics, who had relegated them to "Tib's Eve" and other impracticable dates, being well pleased to see their own prophecies refuted.

People began to turn their faces with increasing confidence towards the new prospect. John Morrissey gave his old wreck of a boat "in a present" to the Widdy Mulcahy for firewood. He said he reckoned he had got a seven-year lease of life, now that he could be keeping on the dry land; and he thought he had a good chance of stopping where he

was, at all events until Larry, the oldest boy, was grown enough to be looking after things for the rest.

"Och, but herself's the lucky woman," Biddy O'Keefe said, talking over a neighbour's affairs with Ally McQuaide. "Wid the fine place they'll have now, her ould father need niver do another stroke of work that he's not fit for, but just sit aisy in the chimney-corner, and let the rough day go by him." Biddy spoke enviously, for she had in her mind a dream of her own that could now never come true.

"Lucky she is," said Ally. "But, sure, I wouldn't wonder if the people are luckier that all these sorts of days ha' gone by, the rough and the smooth—a dale luckier, plase God."

Some such view would probably have been found underlying most of her neighbours' philosophies of life. Nevertheless, there was hardly one of them but would cheerfully have admitted that "the chance of the bit of land made all the differ to them—all the differ in the world."

COLOPHON

THESE things happened "not so long ago," and the changes which they were to bring about being of a slow-growthed sort, are still in progress. They are not on an imposing scale, nor of much importance to any except the persons immediately concerned. A few new cottages roomier than the old ones, some fields where the earth does not seem to have set its face stonily against the tiller of it—that is nearly all. Yet mention of them has already found its way into print; for the authoress of *Slum Symphonies*, fallen upon evil days and captious critics, was obliged to accept a slenderly remunerative commission from the editor of *The Endless Sabbath* for a series of Irish travel sketches. And one day as she wheeled herself through Kilcashel she noticed several comfortable-looking cottages with glossy, yellow thatch and gay little gardens dotted among thriving crops, golden and green, and was struck by the well-to-do appearance of the people she met coming along from a fair. Then she sat down on a bank to rest, and saw peering over the trees not far off what looked like the turret of a castle. So she asked its owner's name of a stout, elderly man, who was driving by in a fishy-smelling donkey-cart; and he replied, "Is it up at Barnaglen? Sure, Lord Fintragh."

"Oh, indeed," she said, misspelling the name in her notebook. "Your landlord, I suppose?"

"Well now, he does be ownin' some of the land," said the fish-cart man.

"And a very good one, I'm sure, and does a great deal for his people," the authoress said, scribbling away.

"Och bedad, himself's the ould naygur that's in it," said the fishdealer. "You wouldn't be wantin' a fine pair of limon soles, melady? Jig along wid you, Nellie."

As this description conveyed no idea at all to the authoress's mind, she construed it in accordance with her preconceived opinion, and her sketch ran: "Here the cleanly-thatched, flower-embowered, cottagers' homes were a pleasant contrast to other less favourable dwellings, and their occupants in their picturesque but simple attire, the men in stout homespuns, the women neatly gowned and shawled, looked fully conscious of their happy lot. And above all, as if watching over the hamlet from its groups of ancestral trees, rose the battlements of a feudal castle, Burninglyn, the stately family seat of Lord Fyntry, the faithful steward of many a broad acre, on which the contented peasant owns the kindly sway of 'the rayul ould nobility, God bless him,' as the quaint old farmer I questioned termed him with glistening eyes."

In real life Lord Fintragh is supported under the affliction of the improvements thus referred to by two consolatory circumstances. One of these was his own happy thought of calling the new cottages Hanmer built on the borders of the Shanabawn demesne "the Park Piggeries." He does so whenever he passes them by, and with a thrill of satisfaction, which helps to counteract the otherwise painful impression produced by the spectacle. His second consolation lies in the growing brilliancy of his favourite daughter's match. For Timothy Vittie's fortunes continue to rise by leaps and bounds, if progression towards solemnly lofty places may fittingly be so described. At present he is a baronet, but as he has just endowed a suffragan bishopric, it is confidently predicted that the new year will see his elevation to the peerage. Ulster King-at-Arms has traced his descent from several mythical heroes of the Red Branch, and he will probably revive the ancient title of Ought Ormond, borne long since by his chieftain ancestors. Very soon he will be privileged to entertain Royalty, and offer it wedding gifts. Nor is it by any means impossible that one of these days he may, as a stroke of business, bring about a great war, and so attain to the dignity of a historical character. And nobody can doubt that his wife, the sharer of this high destiny, must be to her family, friends, and acquaintances an object of pride, admiration, and envy. That she herself

feels her felicity fall short occasionally of absolute perfection is, of course, inevitable ; there are motes in the purest water. But the extreme triviality of the trials she has to encounter may be inferred from a brief excerpt from her correspondence. "Just imagine," she wrote lately to her sister Mabel, "like a fool I let that wretched man order our At Home cards this time, and he has put '*the Hon. Lady Vittie,*' and insists on sending them out. Isn't it utterly awful, and what on earth am I to do?"

Thus we see that a splendour of marvellously dazzling blossom has sprung from that financial operation effected years ago on the oozy strand at Port Maguire. But this blossom has not grown within reach of the two other persons who took part in the transaction. Timothy's mother enjoyed only a short sojourn at large among her old acquaintances before she was again placed under restraint. Not at Saville House. That establishment had broken up for good, its proprietor having fled over seas with panic-stricken precipitation. He appeared one morning at breakfast to the undelighted eyes of his distinguished relative, wearing more than ever the aspect of those ill-favoured cattle whose browsings are wont seriously, if not fatally, to inconvenience their wholesome brethren. "But I don't really see why you need have levanted," the Rev. Charles Gregory said, upon hearing what had occurred. "With the magistrate's and medico's certificates all regular, wouldn't you have been safe enough?"

"Oh, that other affair, you know, might have been brought up against me," said Dr. Gregory, "and it wasn't worth running any risks for; the concern hasn't been paying off late."

"Upon my word, Joe," the popular preacher said, after reflection, "I don't see that there's anything left for you to do but take up my own calling. I know you haven't any great turn for it, and you mayn't ever make much of it, but we can put you into some quiet little place, and you might just get along. Your past experience would be rather advantageous than otherwise."

This was unpalatable advice, for in earlier years Joe had often taxed his brother's forbearance by profane scoffs, and

had commonly spoken of his pulpit as the fire-escape. But now he had no resource save to accept it; and he has found the occupation less distasteful than he expected. After a time, indeed, he won quite a considerable local reputation in the south-eastern country, where lies the field of his labours. And the most effective of his pulpit anecdotes is an account of how his ministry in the sister island was ended by a flight for his life from the violence of an infuriated Papist mob.

But Timothy Vittie had no difficulty in providing a securer domicile for his mother, whence she is little likely to re-emerge. There her days pass in much monotony, shadowed by forebodings of her own future, and lit, rather luridly, by forecasts of the retribution awaiting her ugly-looking big thief of a bad son. Only now and then she goes back in dreams a long way to the old days when she was a small child, sitting between her father and mother in the white-walled chapel, and admiring the sun shining on the wonderful blue and yellow panes in the rounded tops of the tall windows.

Scarcely less obscure, outwardly at least, is the lot of that other unwilling founder of the Vittie millionaireship. Bernard Conroy returned to Glenore from his holiday at Port Maguire in a dejected frame of mind, which was not unobserved by Father Heany, the parish priest, who knew something about his troubles. It happened not long afterwards that Father Heany had a journey to make, and he invited Bernard to accompany him. He was not going very far—only to visit his old friend, the Superior of Knockallen Abbey in the next county. Some anniversary in the abbey's annals was to be commemorated, and Father Heany had been invited to take part in the ceremonies. They set off very early on a spring-summer morning, and arrived at the abbey just in time for High Mass, which was celebrated with much elaboration. Bernard had never seen anything at all like the chapel, a marvel of spacious splendour, set among austere surroundings, with arches and pillars, images and paintings, stained-glass aglow, gilding and vestments, miraculous to behold. It impressed him mightily. But above all, he had never heard any such music, the raucous gasps of a decrepit harmonium having so far

represented to him the powers of an organ. Here the great pipes were a fountain of melodious thunder mingled with celestial bird-notes, and a mass of Mozart was being sung, full of grand, soaring choruses and small sweet lays. Bernard listened quiveringly, sometimes half entranced and losing the consciousness of his own delinquency, sometimes feeling it more acutely than ever. It was just as the choir burst into the exultant, almost rollicking, strains of a *Quoniam Tu solus Sanctus es*, that a sudden access of faith and fervour came to him, bringing a conviction of how much hope there might be for him yet, if he could stay there always, and work along with the brown-frocked brothers, turning his back upon the world where he had made so bad a start, less by his own than another's misdoing, and where he had lately received a warning intimation of being still on a wrong road. He lost no time in communicating this wish to Father Heany, whom it neither surprised nor displeased, and who spoke of it to the Superior. "You'd find him useful in your schools," he said. "He certainly has a gift for teaching. And I think myself he has a vocation, but of course time will show that."

"Oh, he would have a spell of rough field work first," said the Superior, "and that shakes off doubtful cases like ripe walnuts."

So Bernard has joined the brotherhood at Knockallen. It is a life of hard work and rough fare, with few distractions by day, and sleep broken in upon by the frequent clang of bells calling to prayer. The keynote of it all is struck by the minatory legends that appear conspicuously on the whitewashed walls of dormitory and corridor. But Bernard feels that he is safer so; and as this is the object of his first desire, he has some grounds for content with his choice.

It was definitely made at the time when Christy McQuaide and Biddy O'Keefe "were about getting married," and it threw a slight shadow over the bridegroom's felicity. He was aggrieved at his cousin's withdrawal from the world they lived in, and somewhat disgusted at the cause—sentiments which he expressed to Owen Kinsella who had come over for the wedding. "'Twas a quare notion for the lad to

take up wid," he said, "and contrary too. Sure now, if he made his mind up to go about all the rest of his life wid his head in a six-foot sack, it's annoyed one 'ud be to see him. And this business seems to me the same sort of thing."

"It wouldn't suit you or me, at all events," said Owen. "It seems to me an unhandy way of settin' about doin' anythin' sensible. People come by none too many chances of that anywheres without runnin' together into a little hole, and stickin' in it like rabbits in a burrow when the tarrier's waitin' convenient outside. But if that's how they're supposin' it is wid them, maybe it's their best plan."

Owen had got employment at a lifeboat station some way off along the coast—an arrangement of which Christy did not entirely approve either. "And you yourself, Owen," he said now—they were sitting by the fire in Christy's new "little house of his own," while Mrs. Biddy was making a potato cake for supper—"I'd ha' thought you'd be comin' to the farmin' work, and you wid such a opinion of the land, liefer than keepin' on the say. We'd enough of that when we'd ne'er an offer of anythin' else."

"Sure there's plinty of people to be goin' on this bit of land widout me, that's got nobody belongin'," said Owen. "And, you see, they'll all be took up for a while gettin' themselves settled on it, and a good job too. But by raison of that, it's waitin' a bit I may have to be wid some of me own notions; so I might as well be at somethin' middlin' sensible just in the meantime, and they're always wantin' a hand wid the lifeboat. The storms 'ill be risin' up wild next month. 'Deed now, one night last week was as dirty as you'd want it, and great work we had gettin' three men out of an ould brig that was doin' her endeavours to sink under them as fast as she could, founderin' off Erlish Point. 'Twasn't as aisy a job as we had with Mr. Hanmer that time in the spring, but I wouldn't wonder if it was maybe an uglier hole we got him out of."

Christy was but unwillingly convinced by Owen's defence of his occupation. The truth was that the happiness he had now begun to look into through his own eyes made him wish other men a nearer sight of the same than seemed likely to be the portion of a monk or a manner of lifeboats. Before

long, however, he saw a bit of it fall to the share of Ulick Hanmer, whom he had by this time entered upon his list of friends, cataloguing him as "a rael gintleman, and sinsible enough, when he gave his mind to what he was about."

On a fine autumn afternoon Hanmer went up to Shanabawn House. It was still occupied by Sir Herbert Considine with his wife and daughter, though it had been sold along with the land, for Sir Herbert's health had remained so bad all through the summer that a move had seemed impossible. Now he was strong again, and talking ruefully of a speedy departure. The weather was clear and still, the air soft and summer-like, faintly scented with the blue smoke of burning weeds ; fallen leaves made coloured shadows under the trees on the lawns, and over all was a wonderful golden thatch of slanted beams from a sun which seemed to be setting the whole day long. Sir Herbert was basking on the terrace outside the window of the drawing-room where Hanmer and Griselda were sitting. Hanmer had had several interviews with her since their first hurried dialogue in the hall. At the end of the long room Lady Considine was happy at her piano ; that morning's post had brought good news of her dear Archer. She was playing the minuet in Haydn's Ninth Symphony. Griselda maintained ever afterwards that it was just the pleasant, lazy look of things that had put the idea into his head, when he rather abruptly pointed out to her how if he and she were married, they might all stay together, and there need be no flitting at all. She used, indeed, to declare he had recommended the arrangement by saying that "it would save a great deal of trouble," but this is probably an exaggeration. Be it as it may, however, she fell in with his views, and the announcement of the match gave general satisfaction in the neighbourhood, where it was regarded as one of the unusually numerous things about which "Glory be to God" might be said on the threshold of that winter, when hopes were more plenty and fears less rife than heretofore on the countryside between Kilcashel and Port Maguire.

THE END

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